

The Making Of A New South African Craft:

'Township Craft' and Development Discourse
in Post-Apartheid Cape Town.

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for the award of the Master of Philosophy in Development Studies

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Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract

The author discusses postdevelopment theory by exploring unintentional effects of development practices in Cape Town's craft scene. A heterodox research design is adopted, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's ideas on cultural production, notions of authenticity, representation and the modern/traditional dichotomy as well as thoughts on the making of a New South African identity. This is applied to the dynamics of Cape Town's craft scene in the pursuit of answering four research questions: (i) What role does the township play in the image of post-apartheid South Africa? (ii) How does development discourse contribute to the re-imagining of post-apartheid South Africa through 'township craft'? (iii) Is development discourse conducive to maintaining and creating tensions between centres and peripheries in the New South Africa? (iv) To what extent can a heterodox research design contribute to the postdevelopment debate?

Through the socio-semiotic analysis of qualitative data obtained from interviews with fourteen stakeholders in Cape Town's craft scene as well as observations made at sites, where 'township craft' is presented and/or produced, the author is able to give three main insights in relation to the stated questions: (i) The image of the township, represented through cultural commodities, plays a crucial role as a place of creativity and positive change in the making of a post-apartheid identity. (ii) Development discourse manifests itself in the making of a New South African identity through material culture in the form of 'township craft' and its conceptual as well as spatial contexts. (iii) The use of development discourse in the making and marketing of 'township craft' in combination with supposedly 'common knowledge' about the art/craft divide has the potential to create and maintain patterns of inequality between producers and sellers of 'township craft'.

A recommendation is made to explore further possibilities of heterodox research designs for studies using a postdevelopment theoretical framework.

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Preface

This is **not** an art-historical work on the origins and the history of 'township craft'. I have to make this clear as the thesis' title 'The Making of a New South African Craft' might lead the reader to the assumption that I intend to explore the category of 'township craft' as some kind of 'new invention'. This is not the case; instead I would like to ask the reader to leave the 'New' with a capital 'N' and to draw her or his attention to the subtle, and slightly ironic, conceptual play around 'newness' in relation with ideas around 'the New South Africa'. The subtitle *Development Discourse and 'Township Craft' in Post-Apartheid Cape Town* then provides the reader with further information about the actual nature of the thesis which is basically a sociological analysis of discourses of development in the context of a certain kind of craft which is commonly associated with 'the township'. It therefore does deal with notions familiar to the discipline of art history, such as 'representation', 'authenticity', 'traditional/modern', however not in the sense of art-historical facts, but in the realm of discourses associated with 'the New South Africa', 'development', 'newness' and 'exoticism'. And it is a sociological thesis, because it is not purely an analysis of discourse, but it aims to ground the insights from the discourse analysis in observations on tensions between the economic centres and peripheries of Cape Town's art/craft scene.

These intentions behind the thesis also explain my choice of thesis structure, writing style, literature, theory and methodology:

The **structure** of my thesis follows that of a rather typical sociological study with the opening chapters setting the work up in terms of theory, conceptualisation and methodology. This is followed by a lengthy discussion of my 'findings' and the conclusion. I use inverted commas when I talk about 'findings' in relation to my thesis because again it may awake false expectations about their factuality. I would like to repeat that in this thesis I am concerned with discourses and this is also reflected in the **writing style** which I use throughout the discussion in the later chapters. In this respect I maybe divert from what would be expected from a 'typical' or 'conservative' sociological study as I use a rather discursive style which not always makes the intended meaning of certain statements necessarily explicit and does not always resolve ambiguities in meanings where they occur. I admit that this puts an additional onus on the reader to read this thesis carefully and especially use citations from it only with

enough accompanying context or explanation to avoid any misunderstandings about the nature and purpose of the thesis in its entirety. The same cautiousness is necessary in regard to the **literature** on art and craft referred to in the thesis. I do reflect on literature about South African art and craft, but I do so in a deliberately selective manner, because I cannot and I do not aim to resolve the numerous thorny debates on ‘authenticity’, ‘Art/craft’, ‘traditional/modern’ etc. in relation to ‘art’ in general and ‘African art’ in particular. Instead I provide the reader, and especially those readers without a background in art, with a maybe not complete but comprehensive overview of the existing literature on these debates in relation to the imaginary category of ‘township craft’. I decided to do so in the awareness and expectation of the possibility that the topic of the thesis would invite readers from different academic disciplines and philosophical strands to read it. The same motivation moved me in respect to the different **theories** being used in the thesis. In order to avoid any confusion: its overarching theoretical framework is postdevelopment theory with its affiliation to postmodernism. However, in the thesis I make the point that the postdevelopmental endeavour could benefit from the inclusion of additional poststructural standpoints other than Foucault and this is why I also draw from Bourdieu (commenting on the socio-economic consequences of the art field) and Gottdiener (complementing Foucauldian discourse analysis with a materialistic note, which I find necessary in face of the manifestation of ‘township craft’ in actual objects; and linking the theoretical framework with the methodology). I also make use of Clifford, mostly in order to illuminate the point that in this thesis I am not concerned with ‘township craft’ in an art-historical but a contextual sense. This means that during my fieldwork I did not look out for objects of ‘township craft’ according to formal criteria for what qualifies an object as such but for spatial and conceptual contexts which allowed objects to be labelled that way. The matter of fieldwork brings up the question about the **methodology**. In this respect I clearly follow a well-established form of sociological inquiry. I mostly rely on interviews with different stakeholders and experts in Cape Town’s craft scene as a means of qualitative research. I complement this with a way of visual research and the use of fieldwork notes throughout the discussion.

It emerges from this preface that while writing the thesis I was faced with all the challenges associated with interdisciplinary projects. I harbour no illusions over the fact

that, writing about such an expanded topic, one always risks his work to be ‘thin’ in one part or the other, especially in the confined frame of a mini-dissertation. I therefore ask the reader to judge this work not on one single aspect and from one disciplinary standpoint alone but guided by the question for the merits of bringing together different disciplines and theoretical strands in the light of the research questions at hand.

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I. Introduction

1. Why Development Discourse and 'Township Craft'?

This thesis is based on the observation that a lot of discussion surrounding the making of the New South Africa borrows its concepts from development discourse, such as sustainability, self-sufficiency, job-creation etc. The recent popularity of such 'buzzwords' over the last ten years is not a purely South African phenomenon and vests development practitioners around the globe "(...) with almost unimpeachable moral authority." (Cornwall and Brock 2005: 1043) I conducted the research for this study in the assumption that in the case of 'township craft' this process is not a purely semantic phenomenon but directly informs ways of representing, marketing and, consequentially, producing 'township craft'. For example a company, which is producing and selling wire art under a Fair Trade label might be in favour of having its workshop with employees from the townships next to its showrooms in the city centre in order to strengthen its image as a socially responsible, job-creating organisation (not business!). Apart from its symbolic value in terms of visual representation as well as the spatial relationship between the city centre and the township such a strategy would have a direct socio-economic impact on this organisation's employees due to the increased distance between their homes and workplace. This study aims at revealing such unintended effects of development initiatives in Cape Town's craft scene.

The second basic assumption was that the notion of culture is still underrepresented and often misinterpreted in the field of development studies. This lack of a creative and innovative approach to culture in (post-)development theories and the aspiration to contribute to filling this gap provide the theoretical background to this study. This is not to say that the field of development studies has not evolved from its early beginnings when questions of culture were sidelined by economic debates between conservative modernisation theorists and progressive neo-Marxists. In fact the postdevelopment school claims to have abolished any ideological content (at least on the surface) and local culture has emerged as a key concept in the search for postdevelopment paradigms (Sachs 1992, Rahnema and Bawtree 1997, Crush 1996, Matthews 2004). However some of these paradigms have become the subject of criticism themselves, being blamed for misinterpreting Foucaultian critiques of development discourse and constructionist approaches with the intention of turning the Western-dom-

inated discourse on its head but by thus replacing one hegemonic ideology or “truth” with another (Ziai 2004: 1045, Tamas 2004, Briggs and Sharp 2004). Nevertheless, the recent rise of ‘culture’ and alternative approaches to issues of social change in development theory is illustrated by a collection of papers presented at an interdisciplinary conference titled Connecting Cultures in a recent issue of the *Third World Quarterly*. In the editorial Emma Bainbridge (2005: 391) writes:

Papers that began with what appeared to be a debate on the irreconcilable differences between cultures or societies also posited the suggestion that the boundaries were less clear than previously thought and that in the spaces occurring at the interstices there was the potential for a whole new reading, for an innovative interpretation of the past that considered culture less as an immutable force and more in terms of a dynamic and organic series of possibilities.

The reasons for choosing ‘township craft’ as my research object are twofold. Firstly as a symbol for the idea of a New South Africa and in this sense a signifier for culture it represents a welcome opportunity to test and develop some of my ideas informed by works on the sociology of culture and social change. This is even more true since the craft sector has been identified as an already significant and potentially growing sector for economic development not only for developing countries in general but South Africa and the Western Cape in particular. An earlier report on the South African Craft Industry from 1998 by the Cultural Industries Growth Strategy acknowledges the impossibility of producing accurate statistics on an “industry”, which lacks industrial organisation and remains largely informal but goes on to provide estimates according to which about 340.000 individuals were employed in the South African craft sector (CIGS 1998: 28). Another background report on the craft industry in the Western Cape even estimates that “[a]ccording to the 1997 census, some 1,2 million people are currently employed in craft - or craft related - activities, while economists estimate that the sector contributes in the region of R3,5 billion to the economy annually” Heathcock (2000: 4). As much as their estimates are differing and the reliability of their data is questionable the two reports agree on the great potential of the craft sector as one of the driving forces behind the establishment of a viable Small and Medium Businesses sector (SMMEs) in South Africa (CIGS 1998: 9, Heathcock 2000: 2). Both reports also acknowledge the importance of the rapid growth of the tourism sector since South Africa’s emergence from international isolation in 1994 as the eminent factor behind the recent developments in the craft sector (CIGS 1998: 7, Heathcock

2000: 3). Observations of this kind might have been the cause for stakeholders in the industry to look for opportunities of bringing the industry in a more organised and formal framework; the *Strategic Plan for 2003/4-2005/6* by the Department of Economic Development and Tourism designated R250000 for the objective of “[a].dynamic, innovative and helpful Cape Craft Design Institute” with the strategy of “[utilising] existing craft expertise at academic institutions to develop, market and improve the design of community-based craft through support of the Institute” (Provincial Government Western Cape 2003: 36). The Cape Craft Design Institute (CCDI) has been formally established in 2001 and is now the most important institution in the craft sector in the Western Cape. In 2003 it published a report entitled *Strategic Recommendations for the Development of the Craft Sector in the Western Cape* (Wijnberg 2003). This report differs from the two earlier ones in its methodology by relying more on qualitative methods in form of interviews than trying to apply quantitative measures to an elusive sector, but like the other two its content concerns first of all market-related questions for improving and expanding the craft sector. This focus on purely economic factors provides me with a second reason for conducting a study on culture in relation to craft with the goal to complement the existing economic and quantitative analyses with a more cultural and qualitative perspective.

The given reasons explain my choice of craft as a research object but not of the subcategory of ‘township craft’. There have been many studies of South African craft which focus on ‘traditional’ African art (Graburn 1978, Bascom 1978, Levinsohn 1984, Jules-Rosette 1984, Crosswaite 2004). In fact I refer to them repeatedly as ideal opposites to ‘township craft’, especially where notions of ‘traditional’ and ‘modernity’ are involved. ‘Tradition’ is a problematic concept, especially in South Africa, where notions of ‘the traditional’ have and still continue to be used and exploited for political reasons (Spiegel 1994). Sandra Kloppe (1996) describes in the essay *Whose Heritage? The Politics of Cultural Ownership in Contemporary South Africa* how the notion of tradition remains an important argument in the debates on the making and representation of culture and heritage in South Africa. In this sense I would like to emphasise that this study treats the traditional as a construct as much as it explores the meaning of the New South Africa as a construct. The decision to focus on ‘township craft’ allows me to explore the image of the New South Africa more thoroughly.

2. Research Questions

What role does the township play in the image of post-apartheid South Africa?

This first question is based on the hypothesis that the image of the township is acquiring a more multi-faceted role in the national self-understanding of the New South Africa. Whereas negative images of the township as a dangerous, or even exotic, place are maintained in post-apartheid South Africa, it is increasingly also perceived as a place of creativity and 'newness'. In this thesis I examine these changing perceptions and the semiotic connotations of craft associated with the township .

How does development discourse contribute to the re-imagining of post-apartheid South Africa through 'township craft'?

Development discourse is firmly entrenched in the South African public consciousness through the work of development organisations, but also the language and visual symbols surrounding them. The craft sector is particular open towards this process, as it has been identified by the local and national government(s) to have strong potential for large-scale socio-economic development. Therefore it lends itself to an analysis of how development discourse makes itself an essential part in the making of the New South Africa.

Is the use and abuse of development discourse conducive to tensions between centres and peripheries in the New South Africa?

The third question makes the assumption that the use of development discourse for legitimating certain development interventions has the potential to create, or maintain, tensions between places like Cape Town's city centre and more disadvantaged ones, such as the townships. In this study I examine these tensions by looking at the power relations between stakeholders in Cape Town's craft scene from various socio-economic, and spatial, backgrounds.

To what extent can a heterodox research design contribute to the postdevelopment debate?

The theoretical framework of this thesis wields a variety of philosophical and epistemological approaches, in order to provide alternatives to the 'self-reflexivity' of postdevelopment. This 'self-reflexivity' relates to the assumed predisposition of much postdevelopment writing with developmental institutions and academic texts. I use parts of Pierre Bourdieu's work on cultural production, Mark Gottdiener's socio-se-

miotics and concepts unfamiliar to (post)development theory, such as authenticity, representation and the traditional/modernity dichotomy in order to explore how development discourse manifests itself in material culture and social relations.

3. Outlining the Thesis

The thesis is divided into two parts. Chapters II-IV lay out the groundwork in terms of conceptualisation, theory and methodology. In chapters V-VI I apply these concepts, ideas and theories by discussing the findings of my fieldwork in Cape Town's craft scene.

Chapter II is a discussion of the study's theoretical framework based on the postdevelopmental debate. Postdevelopment theory is informed by poststructuralism and borrows much of its theoretical foundations from Foucault and discourse analysis. Although postdevelopment has enjoyed a significant amount of popularity in development studies since its beginnings in the early 1990s, it has repeatedly come under heavy attack from various sides.

This study aims at contributing to the postdevelopment debate by focusing on three major points brought forward against postdevelopment:

- (i) Lack of pragmatism and practicability;
- (ii) Lack of theoretical coherence;
- (iii) Romanticisation of the 'local' and 'traditional'.

Chapter III consists in its first part of a structural approach to conceptualising 'township craft' within the broader art-culture system according to Clifford (1993). Further I discuss concepts such as authenticity, representation and the modern/traditional dichotomy and their meanings in the conceptual making of 'township craft'.

In its second part I trace the literature on African art and craft, beginning with ethnographic studies on the topic to contemporary coffee-table literature on New South African visual culture through three fairly chronological, but not necessarily linear, stages. The aim of this section is not to provide a complete account of the origins and history of certain forms of contemporary African art and craft. Instead the idea is to illustrate the influence of certain traits of literature on African art and craft which, for better or worse, seem to remain influential in the public perception about what constitutes contemporary South African craft.

In the third part I turn the attention to Bourdieu's work on the relationship between art, culture and society. I explore how his theories can help to understand the ways, in

which the field of cultural production is instrumental in reproducing social inequalities. I also evaluate criticisms of Bourdieu's work and potential difficulties for applying it in the contemporary South African context.

Chapter IV starts with some epistemological considerations concerning the study's methodological background. I introduce Mark Gottdiener's socio-semiotics as the main rationale behind my fieldwork. I then go into the practical details of my data collection and analysis.

Chapter V is the opening chapter for the discussion of my fieldwork's findings. I begin by examining a particular spatial context, in which 'township craft' is being presented, marketed and sold alongside other visual signifiers for the image of a New South Africa. I show how its notion of progress plays itself out in a place, where the commodification of culture has reached its peak per definitionem; the Baobab Mall on 210 Long Street, Cape Town.

The second part of the chapter is a closer look on how old ideas on Africa are being recycled and new ones invented in the making of a particular kind of 'township craft' - wire art. I chose the example of wire art, because it is arguably the most visible symbol for contemporary South Africa, where the urban in the form of wire and tin is slowly pushing aside, but not replacing, the rural in form of wood and clay from the stage of authenticity and national identity.

Chapter VI brings together the various connections between development discourse and South African 'township craft'. I show how development discourse is being used to market 'township craft'. I then critically examine in particular the tensions between the centres and peripheries in the New South Africa, which are being created and/or maintained through the use of development discourse.

II. Postdevelopment and Its Critics

The theoretical framework to this study is provided by the debate on postdevelopment discourse. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate my research's potential relevance to this debate by following the subsequent argument structure: firstly I give a brief overview of postdevelopment and its criticisms of classical development theory before I turn to the criticisms made against postdevelopment itself. I then situate my own research within this literature canon by fundamentally agreeing with the core claims made by postdevelopment authors. However, I also concur with and pick up some of the criticism brought against postdevelopment by showing how this study can complement (and partly contradict) existing postdevelopment literature by

- (i) intensifying and broadening the influence of poststructural and extra-disciplinary literature in postdevelopment discourse,
- (ii) extending postdevelopment's focus from self-reflexive discourse analysis to new research areas,
- (iii) using a greater variety of research methodologies informed by the above mentioned goal (i) and in pursuit of goal (ii).

1. Postdevelopment

The postdevelopment turn in development studies can be traced back to the introduction of poststructural and postmodern ideas and thoughts in the development arena in the 1980s and early 1990s (Schuurman 2000: 7).¹ Probably the most prominent and, at the same time, most frequently mentioned poststructural author in postdevelopment writing without a special interest in development theories is Michel Foucault² (Esco-

1. I will not give a complete or even comprehensive account of the various and often contradicting streams and variations of postdevelopment thought, that have emerged since then, but will focus on a few points, which I see as relevant for the purposes of the argument made in this chapter. For the same reason I will be treating development as a homogenous discourse despite its heterogeneous character and in awareness of and partial support of the critique that postdevelopmental writers tend to essentialise development (Nederveen Pieterse 2000: 183).

2. I am aware that not all postdevelopmental writers draw directly from Foucault. Also not all do so with the same degree of accuracy or with the same quality of interpretation. However I see it as legitimate to use this shortcut, as postdevelopment theorists generally agree on refusing not only the legitimacy of the rules and practices within the development discourse, but the whole discourse itself. Such an approach is always linked to a Foucauldian understanding of discourse, even when it is not made explicit. For a comprehensive account of Foucault's influence on postdevelopment see the chapter on Poststructuralism, Postcolonialism and Postdevelopmentism in Richard Peet's (1999) *Theories of Development*.

bar 1985, Schuurman 2000: 9, Tamas 2004, Ziai 2004, Nederveen Pieterse 2000: 176). His attacks on Western positivism entail an 'archaeology of knowledge' (Foucault 1972, Peet 1999: 129), in which he is demonstrating the historically constructed and uneven, not natural and linear, development of key principles of the Western belief system. His rejection of universal truths caused him to favour "(...) local knowledge, the "return of [forgotten] knowledge," an insurrection of subjugated knowledges, blocs of historical knowledges usually disqualified as inadequate, naïve, mythical, beneath the required level of scientificity (Peet 1999: 131)." Foucault was basically interested in power relations, but not in terms of obvious and intentional forms of power but the often hidden and unintentional dynamics of power in respect to discourse- and knowledge making (Peet 1999: 131). Development as a discourse is described by Arturo Escobar (2002: 83):

To understand development as a discourse, one must look not at the elements themselves but at the system of relations established among them. It is this system that allows the systematic creation of objects, concepts, and strategies; it determines what can be thought and said. These relations - established between institutions, socioeconomic processes, forms of knowledge, technological factors, and so on - define the conditions under which objects, concepts, theories, and strategies can be incorporated into the discourse. In sum, the system of relations establishes a discursive practice that sets the rules of the game: who can speak, from what points of view, with what authority, and according to what criteria of expertise; it sets the rules that must be followed for this or that problem, theory, or object to emerge and be named, analyzed, and eventually transformed into a policy or a plan.

Postdevelopment then entails a critical application of Foucault to the discourse of development, where, despite the inherent contradictions between the different schools the belief in progress, betterment –in short: development– has so far been the one essential truth. Postdevelopment authors challenge the totality of development discourse (Sachs 1992, Rahnema and Bawtree 1997, Crush 1995) and the eurocentric concept of development as a universal truth in favour of 'local ways of doing things' (Matthews 2004). Some of these critics went as far as presenting development discourse as a tool of power in the hands of the dominant classes aiming to maintain rule over the 'subaltern' of this world (Escobar 1995, Sachs 1992, Rahnema and Bawtree 1997, Shanin 1997, Rist 1997, Esteva 1985, Nandy 1997):

In the last ten years, however, there has been an efflorescence of literature, which contests the very meaning of development. Applying the lessons of poststructuralism, this nascent school – which has come to be known as postdevelop-

ment thought – proposes that development is itself an arbitrary concept rooted in a meta-narrative which, in turn, reflects the interests of its practitioners (Rapley 2004: 350).

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2. Critiques of Postdevelopment

The propositions made by postdevelopment theorists were and are not always well received among their more conservative colleagues. Just like postdevelopment itself the critiques of it are diverse and can hardly be generalised, but most of them can be grouped around the following three core arguments.³ My comments on each point clarify in what ways this study can contribute to the respective debates.

Lack of pragmatism and practicality

The first fundamental criticism is the accusation that postdevelopment does not offer any pragmatic or practical solutions to problems like mass-poverty, hunger and huge social inequalities (Nederveen Pieterse 2000: 184, 186).

Considering the often high degree of abstractness of postmodern texts in general and also in development theory this accusation might seem to hold some truth but it nevertheless misses the point:

Poststructuralist critiques, however, target the discourses within which this notion of practicability is formed. This demand for practicality, then, is formed within a discourse whose foundations are the object of assault (Tamas 2004: 650).

The point is that proponents of postdevelopment are not looking for an alternative form of development in terms of practice but for an alternative to development itself. However, this does not necessarily mean that postdevelopment has abolished the need for adequate solutions to existential challenges facing humanity today:

As attested by Foucault's life of political activism, the recognition of foundations as equivocal and choice as uncertain leaves untouched the obligation to act. What this does, however, is remove the certitude that authorises and naturalises the oft-noted arrogance of the subjects of a dominant discourse (Tamas 2004: 654).

I therefore propose to see postdevelopment thought as a tool of analysis necessary for improving existing development practices. In this sense I apply postdevelopment thinking in this study not necessarily just for criticising existing strategies and methods of job creation, empowerment etc. through the production, marketing and sale of 'township craft', but in order to help evaluate and calculate the actual and potential benefits, risks and damages brought by these strategies. One could argue that by doing

3. See Ziai (2004: 1049) for a more comprehensive summary of the standard criticisms against postdevelopment.

so I am myself falling into the trap of proposing a change of development practice, whereas I should actually reject the whole body of discourse, which this practice is part of. My argument is that any activity in the name of development is not necessarily wrong and has to be discarded just because the ideology behind it is flawed. However, I believe that postdevelopment theory tells us to question the formerly unquestionable and naturalised principles behind development practices and evaluate them according to different criteria than those of their respective ideologies.

Lack of theoretical coherence

The second counter-argument is that the use of poststructuralism or postmodernism as the theoretical backbone to postdevelopment is often crude and intentionally misleading or inaccurate and in need of a better understanding and interpretation of poststructuralism. Again Foucault finds himself in the centre of this debate:

Commentators such as Stuart Corbridge (1998), David Lehmann (1997) and Nederveen Pieterse (2000) are correct to lament the facile oppositional rhetoric of some (often the most visible) postdevelopment writers and a certain lack of scholarship by some contributors. One manifestation of the latter is postdevelopment's limited use of its self-identified theoretical resources, the most prominent which, at least to date, is Michel Foucault (Brigg 2002: 422).

Some used this criticism (Nederveen Pieterse 2000: 180, Lehmann 1997) as a vehicle for rejecting postdevelopment as a whole, others saw it as an opportunity to reinforce postdevelopment's claims by applying poststructural theories (Tamas 2004) in a more precise manner. A good example of the latter group is Morgan Brigg (2002), who goes back to the roots of Foucault's work, in order to apply his notions of *dispositif* and normalisation for "(...) understanding the operation of power in the post-war development project, and for comprehending how power operates through the World Bank (Brigg 2002: 421)."

I agree that the poststructural foundations of postdevelopment find only a weak reflection in the works of some authors and that especially Foucault's very complex literature on the power of knowledge is often compromised to a crude attack on development institutions and "the West". I therefore support Brigg's effort in strengthening the postdevelopmental school by building it more firmly and directly on Foucault. At the same time this study aims at broadening postdevelopment's theoretical framework; most of its methodology is directly based on the study of signs, or semiotics, which is usually only implicitly used by postdevelopment writers working with Fou-

cault. I also use Pierre Bourdieu's work on cultural production, which allows me to go beyond the self-reflectivity of postdevelopment's usual application of discourse analysis within the realms of development discourse in form of institutions and (academic) texts. This means that I make visible the signs of development discourse not only in words but also, and especially, in social activity as well as material culture. This is not to displace Foucault's central position in postdevelopment theory, but in order to demonstrate that an exclusion of additional poststructural sources in postdevelopment theory and methodology would be one-sided and prejudicial to the goals of the postdevelopment endeavour.

Romanticisation of the 'local' and 'traditional'

The third major point against postdevelopment is its emphasis on the 'local', which is often interpreted as a tendency for romanticising and over-evaluating or misinterpreting traditional methods and solutions (Nederveen Pieterse 2000: 178, 185, Hart 2001: 655, Briggs and Sharp 2004, Kiely 1999, Purcell and Brown 2005).

Certainly this is an essentialisation of the criticism and it has repeatedly been argued in favour of postdevelopment theorists that most of them do not follow a blind naturalism (Ziai 2004: 1050). Also, the inclusion of the actual subjects of development projects in the respective planning process is an idea that has found its way into common development theory and practice in different forms already before the first postdevelopment ideas were articulated (for example through participatory action research methods). Nonetheless I agree with the criticism in the sense that postdevelopment theorists are often walking a fine line and in risk of simply turning the classical development discourse with its inherent teleology from the traditional to the modern on its head and promoting a development 'back to the roots'. Once again this could be avoided by drawing a firm line between postmodern ideas in development as tools of analysis and direct instructions for pragmatic action. This is absolutely not to say that there is no legitimacy of development practices based on a focus on the 'local' such as community-based development and others. A shift away from all-explaining and generalising approaches is inherent to postmodernism and in postdevelopment it indeed implies a movement towards bottom-up development. But to make the shortcut from theory to practice without paying tribute to postdevelopment's significance as a tool for analysis and research would be a one-sided approach and deny its full potential.

The focus on the particular, the 'local', on an analytical level is an interpretation of poststructuralism, which is immune to suspicions of romanticisation. In this sense my choice of 'township craft' as the research object reflects the intention to conduct research on a conceptually, spatially and temporally confined topic.

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III. The Making of 'Township Craft'

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with an understanding of the art- and craft-related concepts used later in the discussion. I must emphasise again that I do not trace the origins and history of certain traditions of South African art and craft. I rather first mention Clifford and focus on the interplay between notions of 'authenticity' and modes of 'representation' in order to understand why and how cultural objects are de-/re-contextualised. This process can be argued to be particularly problematic in the African context where it is all too often bound up with the unequal representation of Others associated with colonial imagery. I make use of this body of literature, as, later in the discussion, I repeatedly refer to the use of development discourse in the contextualisation (marketing, labelling and representation) of contemporary South African craft associated with 'the township'.

The second part of the chapter looks at different 'stages' in writing about certain forms of South African craft and art. What I am trying to achieve here is not about identifying certain characteristics which set objects of 'township craft' apart from other forms of cultural expressions such as township art. It is rather a literature review of different bodies of literature representing the diverse influences on contemporary perceptions of what is seen as 'craft from the townships'. It begins with the notion of African art being treated as ethnographic artefacts, continues with the notion of township art as a political and politicised art form and finishes with post-apartheid imaginations of the township as a source for visuals and symbols representing the New South Africa.

It is necessary to point out that my decision to trace the different influences of literature on our understanding today what constitutes 'township craft' is not equivalent to an attempt to trace the history of this particular form of cultural expression. For example contemporary wire art, which I am referring to extensively throughout the thesis, is anything else but a 'new invention' in Sub-Saharan Africa. Archaeological studies show that metalwork existed in Sub-Saharan Africa hundreds, and in certain areas, thousands of years before the advent of colonialism in Africa. Besides, earliest ethnographic reports of Europeans in Africa mention the use of copper works for bodily adornment (Herbert 1984: 210). Moreover, ironwork not only forms part of a historical tradition of African material culture, it also played a major role in the structure of

many pre-colonial African societies, for example along gender lines (Herbert 1993). The long-standing tradition of drawn brass and copper -wire- in African material culture is then seen as the direct predecessor for contemporary art and craft forms, for example Zulu telephone wire baskets (Nel 2005). In this thesis I deal with such contemporary arts and crafts outside (but in awareness of) their historical contexts, but I need to make clear that this manner of de-historicising cultural objects is significantly different from the one Nettleton refers to when she writes about the bulk of literature on African art and craft published before the mid-1980s:

The major problem in all of this literature, however, in spite of its good intentions, is its failure to see that South African black crafts have a past, that they are situated in historical time, and that one cannot talk about them as absolutes (Nettleton 1989a: 27).

I completely agree with this statement but also, writing in 2006, take for granted the factuality of African art and craft having a past and rather focus on how today, in post-apartheid South Africa, objects of a certain form of craft are contextualised partly through the the very same ignorance Nettleton was writing against almost 20 years ago in conjunction with discourses of 'newness', 'The New South Africa' and 'development'.

The third sub-chapter deals with the work of Bourdieu and thus takes the step from an understanding of the art-culture system based on representation to one based on class inequalities. I deliberately decided to separate the two art-theoretical chapters by inserting the literature review between them in order to avoid the impression that I see a straight continuity between Clifford's and Bourdieu's work. The reason why I still make use of both strands is twofold. Firstly, while I acknowledge the fundamental incompatibility between the two theories I also argue that they share at least one characteristic of significance for the points I later make in the discussion. The point is that both theories reject an idealised view of the cultural sector and provide an understanding of it in opposition to essentialised ideas of 'authenticity', 'purity' and 'beauty' which are all too often associated with art and culture. The following excerpt from a textbook on Bourdieu supports this claim:

For Bourdieu, 'culture' (the whole social world) and 'Culture' (art) exist in a close relationship, because something can only be identified as art if it is found in a context (say, an art museum) that is recognised as artistic; and/or if it is made by someone who is known to be an artist; and/or if those authorised to make such judgements tell us that in fact it is art. (Webb *et al* 2002)

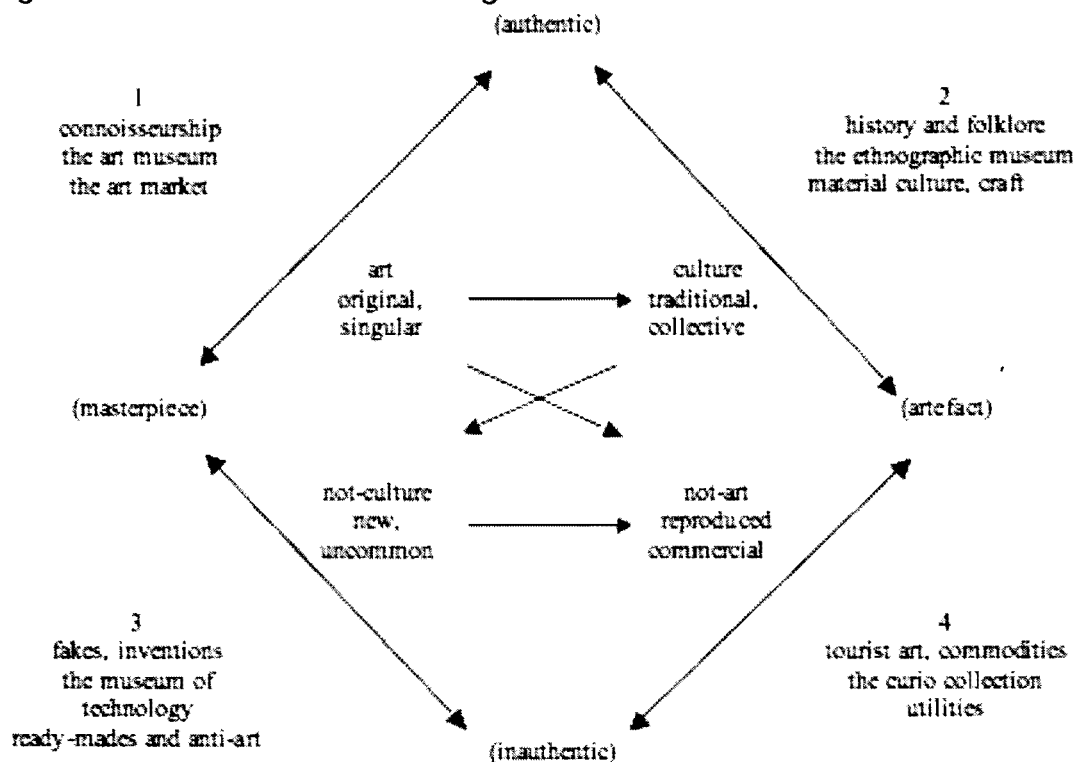
My other reason for the combination of the two theories is that I use them for distinct aspects of my research. While Clifford, as I already mentioned, informs my observations of the role of development discourse in the representation of 'township craft', I use Bourdieu in order to reveal the manifestations of inequality in the production of objects of 'township craft'.

1. Authenticity and Representation

Maybe the greatest challenge of conceptualisation for this study is an exercise in classification. 'Township craft' – opposed to what? Township art? Tourist art? Primitive art? Traditional craft? art or Art? While I will give a more chronological account of the making of this term later in this chapter, I focus for now on its relations as a construct with other categories of art and craft within a 'modern art-culture system' (Clifford 1993).

In his essay *On Collecting Art and Culture* James Clifford (1993) uses a historical and structural approach for tracing the outlines of the dominant Western idea of art and culture. One result of this is the following diagram by Clifford (1993: 57), which invites one to place any object of art and craft into a seemingly coherent system of art and culture:

Figure 2: Clifford's Art-Culture Diagram



Most people would probably place 'township craft' somewhere on the right, 'cultural and not-art' half of the diagram on a fine line between authentic and inauthentic. But then, aren't there for example also those wire artists, who take great pride in the individuality of their objects? Should they be thrown into the same conceptual box with mass-produced key rings? And anyway, why should something be called 'township craft', when it's neither produced in a township nor even made by someone from a township?

The point is that it is impossible to assign an imaginary group of objects to a fixed place within some conceptual system. Any attempt to do so would also be a misinterpretation of Clifford, who emphasises the flexibility and flux of the art-culture system not only over time but also in terms of context:

While the object systems of art and anthropology are institutionalised and powerful, they are not immutable. The categories of the beautiful, the cultural, and the authentic have changed and are changing. Thus it is important to resist the tendency of collections to be self-sufficient, to suppress their own historical, economic, and political processes of production (Clifford 1993: 59).

But it is exactly the 'suppression' of the objects' actual histories, which the art-culture system outlined by Clifford thrives on. It doesn't matter what an object actually is – where it was made by whom and why- but as what it is being represented. This means that the status of any object can change according to the circumstances in which it is being found and presented. Or in the words of Sidney Kasfir (1999: 97, see also Klopfer 1993) on the making of traditional African art, "[i]ronically, it is not knowledge but ignorance of the subject that ensures its authenticity."

The aim is not necessarily to create another sub-category of South African craft in terms of stylistic or aesthetic characteristics, but to identify the circumstances, under which a certain object is perceived or described by the potential buyer and/or vendor/artist as 'township craft'. This implies that a certain object can carry different labels (and meanings) according to the environment, in which it is being sold. For example one can expect that an object sold at the Khayelitsha craft market would be more likely to be perceived as 'true' 'township craft' than if it would be sold at an interior design shop, where its decorative purpose would be expected to come to the foreground. In his essay *Commodities and the Politics of Value* Arjun Appadurai (1986) describes how a certain value is never inherent to any commodified object, but

dependent on the judgement of the subjective observer.⁴ This study is thus dealing with the context of ‘township craft’ rather than with its actual objects. At the same it is not an art-historical work, although it does borrow ideas and concepts from that field. Along those lines I look at the methods of how ‘township craft’ is being marketed and presented, in other words endowed with context and meaning, as a ‘modern, urban, masculine, hard (conceptually and materially)’ art and craft form opposed to ‘traditional, rural, feminine, soft African’ art while maintaining and even highlighting its claim for authenticity through textual narratives and visual references to its traditional predecessor. ‘Representation’ and ‘authenticity’ are two crucial key concepts for this study dealing with the symbolic meanings of objects. Working with them allows me not having to label objects of art and craft according to formalist criteria but according to the contexts, in which I encounter them (‘in ignorance’ as Sidney Kasfir would say, see above). Therefore, an object does not necessarily become an authentic piece of ‘township craft’ in itself but by the ways it is being presented and marketed. Its own visual features often play a minor role and it is more important where it is being sold, by whom, and also what stories are told about it. It also means that the same object can be perceived as a piece of African art, craft, decoration, tourist art etc. or a combination of these categories according to the way it is being represented (Appadurai 1986, Crosswaite 2004). Thus, again, this study is not so much about objects of ‘township craft’ but their contextual frames.

When I talk about the township as the spatial context for a certain kind of craft, the distinction between *in situ* and *in context* as two different modes of representation becomes useful. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998: 19, 21) explains these different manners of exhibiting ethnographic objects in her book *Destination Culture*:

The art of mimesis, whether in the form of period rooms, ethnographic villages, recreated environments, reenacted rituals, or photomurals, places objects (or replicas of them) *in situ*. (...)

In-context approaches to installation establish a theoretical frame of reference for the viewer, offer explanations, provide historical background, make comparisons, pose questions, and sometimes even extend to the circumstances of excavation, collection, and conservation of the objects on display.

4. See also Crosswaite (2004) for an application of Appadurai’s theory in Cape Town’s African art and craft markets.

Looking at the way objects of 'township craft' are being represented at their various points of sale, one cannot make such a clear-cut distinction between *in situ* and *in context* approaches, but certain tendencies to the one or the other are clearly visible. Later in the discussion of my field research I come back to the tension between the city centre and the street or the township as contexts for 'township craft' in more detail.

Finally, *in situ* and *in context* are two different means to achieve the same goal; authenticity. Authenticity, as I have already argued, is a constructed, not inherent, characteristic of an object. In the African context, one can often find a sharp line between the traditional, pre-colonial, and the modern or (post-)colonial as references of distinction between the authentic and the inauthentic (Errington 1994: 201). Contemporary African artists often grapple with these constructs as they find themselves shelved into conceptual boxes, which they do not necessarily identify with. Sidney Kasfir (1999: 93) writes on the arbitrariness of this process:

But the fact is that Africa is a part of the world and has a long history. There are innumerable before and afters in this history, and to select the eve of European colonialism as the unbridgeable chasm between traditional, authentic art and aftermath polluted by foreign contact is arbitrary in the extreme.

But arbitrariness in the making of African Art and its supposed authenticity is not only the result of pseudo-historical definitions. Errington (1994, see also Shiner 1994, Price 1989, Torgovnick 1990) in *What Became Authentic Primitive Art?* shows that not any pre-colonial piece of assumed creativity was and is granted the status of being Art. To put it bluntly: Art becomes what is shown in the museums and can be displayed as such. Therefore, objects of art have to be portable (a question of size) and durable (a question of material) (Errington 1994: 204). Again, the frame is making the picture.

Authenticity is not a quality describing objects of art and craft alone. It is also a device in tourism in order to waken and satisfy the desires of paying customers, and again, in the African context, it is more than often the notion of 'the traditional', together with the exotic, which serves this purpose. Christopher B. Steiner, in *African Art in Transit*, recognises that this condition is not simply born out of the market principle of supply and demand but out of an imagined belief in the modern/traditional dichotomy shared both by buyers and vendors of African art and craft:

Just as the Western buyer looks for Africa for authentic symbols of a “primitive” lifestyle, the African buyer looks to the West for authentic symbols of a modern lifestyle. In both of their searches for the “genuine” in each other’s culture, the African trader and the Western tourist often find only mere approximations of “the real thing” - tropes of authenticity which stand for the riches of an imagined reality. (Steiner 1994: 129)

This ‘African authenticity’, sometimes literally staged, usually refers to a romanticised, pre-colonial, untouched and harmonious Garden Eden resembling Rousseau’s nature state. Edward Bruner and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2005: 36), in *Maasai on the Lawn: Tourist Realism in East Africa*, write on the relationship between this image of a romanticised Africa and its representation in travel brochures on the example of the Kenyan landscape:

Framed by the big-game hunt or by the biblical Garden, situated before the Fall or after the Apocalypse, created by God in six days or through billions of years of evolution, untamed wilderness or transplanted lawn, nature is the star in East African tourism - raw, wild, untouched, given. But nature is a cultural construction, as the formulaic descriptions of generic scenes, animals, and peoples in East African travel brochures make clear. As Theodor Adorno states, “Natural beauty is an ideological notion because it offers mediatedness in the guise of immediacy” (1984, 101).

This staging, or celebration, of a distant past and ‘invention of tradition’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1994, Ranger 2002) can be argued to be nothing else than that - a dedication to nostalgia, naive and harmless, comparable to a Bavarian Oktoberfest, with Lederhosen, and the all rest, in Tokyo. The problem is, however, that ‘the traditional’ in Africa is not always represented as distant or even in the past. Sometimes, for political reasons too, it is specifically associated with Africans “(...) as ‘conservative’, ‘backward’, ‘pre-rational’ and thus fundamentally different from ‘modern’, ‘progressive’ or ‘developed’ people - namely whites.” (Spiegel 1994: 187)

Andrew Spiegel (1994: 186) criticises this representation of Africans as traditionally backward on the grounds that it served apartheid ideologists and politicians, often through the work of anthropologists, as the core argument for separate development, which created the deep and often cruel socio-economic divide burdening South Africa until today and the foreseeable future. But he also argues that the negative representation of Africans continues to exist in tourism, for economic rather than political reasons, and thus hampers South African’s progress towards a non-racist and truly equal society:

Albeit unwittingly, the categories of domination are thus again reinforced through appeals to traditionality, in this instance closely associated with images of pristine nature. The voices calling up these images have no explicit reason for doing so. (...) And the fact that the local tourist industry meets such demands is a reflection of commercial self-interestedness, coupled with a distinct lack of self-conscious evaluation of the political implications of the images conveyed. (Spiegel 1994: 191)

I support Spiegel's claim that 'categories of domination are thus again reinforced' under two conditions. Firstly I argue, and show in this study, that unequal power relations in South African society are indeed created and maintained through constructions of the traditional/modern. But I also assert that in South Africa today this cannot simply be ascribed to a romanticised notion of the traditional Africa. The traditional does play an essential and prominent role, but alongside other perceptions and representations of South Africa as a trendy, modern, urban, non-racial, and -important to this study- developing society. From this perspective, the exoticism of the township plays a role as important as the one of African wildlife.

My second argument concerns Spiegel's opinion on the assumed 'tourist industry's commercial self-interestedness, coupled with a distinct lack of self-conscious evaluation of the political implications of the images conveyed.' In light of my fieldwork's results I disagree with this opinion and instead argue that often those active in this particular field of cultural production reproduce such 'negative' images with very good intentions and in confident awareness of the symbolic power of their work. This can be explained through a public belief in, and political support of initiatives in the name of heritage, social development and creating a New South African identity. Shedding some light on these issues is the purpose of my study.

2. Changing Perceptions of Contemporary (South) African Art and Craft

A chronological review of the literature on South African art and craft allows me to group it into three stages, which are not necessarily homogeneous and often overlap, but nevertheless fairly distinguishable from each other in their perspectives on contemporary craft. These stages have to be seen in context with their respective historical and political settings - apartheid (past), struggle and change (now and recent past) and post-apartheid (now and future). The three stages are:

- (a) Contemporary African art and craft as a form of 'Westernisation' of traditional culture, values, art etc.; often seen as a threat to or endangerment of the traditional,
- (b) coming especially from the townships seen as resistance art against the apartheid system, and
- (c) as a visual and aesthetic celebration of the New South Africa and as a vehicle for 'development'.

Although these 'stages' certainly inform each other, and sometimes even in a single direction, they do not represent a linear development of South African art and craft but shall serve as a tool to distinguish 'township craft' from other aesthetic forms within the shifting art-culture system depicted above. I also have to mention that much of the literature mentioned in this chapter is anthropological and not necessarily art-historical. This might seem peculiar especially in the case of township art, which is often perceived as 'fine art', but it is a fact that most literature on 'traditional' African art treats it as ethnographic objects and that this attitude can still be found in many critiques concerning contemporary South African art (Oguike 1999, Davison 1990, Myers 1995).

The 'Westernisation' of Traditional African Art

A major thread throughout almost any literature on African art and craft is the traditional/modern dichotomy. Authors of earlier works on the subject often refer to it by presenting traditional art forms as being threatened in their very existence by the influence of Western art forms, styles, materials as well as demands. Such art or craft, supposedly designed and produced to attract the attention of a Western audience is often described as tourist art. Nelson H.H. Graburn's (1976) edited volume *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World* is usually referred to as the

foundational work in this field. In the introduction to the book he describes how the formerly homogenous category of “primitive art” has been split into six since the formation of the Fourth World consisting, according to him, of “(...) all aboriginal or native peoples whose lands fall within the national boundaries and techno-bureaucratic administrations of the countries of the First, Second, and Third Worlds” (Graburn 1976: 1). He argues that ‘the aesthetic-formal source’ (minority society, novel/synthetic, dominant society) and the intended audience (minority Fourth World, external civilisations) of any piece of art produced by one or more members of these ethnic groups determine its respective category (functional/traditional, reintegrated, popular, commercial/fine, souvenir/novelty, assimilated/fine) (Graburn 1976: 8). By that he adopts a static idea of culture, in which traditional and modern oppose each other as two ideals. Whenever these two ideals mix, reflected by all categories in which art is either not intended for the artist’s ethnic group and/or not based on its aesthetic-formal tradition, the art object leaves the realm of the traditional and becomes something else – reintegrated, assimilated, souvenir. Graburn (1976: 11, 12) tends to associate these “hybrid” art forms with rather negative connotations:

The assimilation to popular arts –the copying of foreign art traditions from schooled and stratified “civilization”- sometimes occurs in that painful period of rank imitation that follows a people’s loss of independence

And:

Contacts with foreign peoples, education, literacy, travel, and modern media so broaden the ideas and experiences of Fourth World peoples that they may want to change, break away from, or enlarge upon their previously limited traditions. It is these ideas that not only build up new arts, but that are eventually destructive of old traditions.

It is noteworthy that Graburn makes a distinction between changes of artistic taste and style in Third World countries in the pre-colonial times and change brought by Western influences despite the fact that new techniques and styles in art and the loss of others have always occurred, as Bascom (1978) is demonstrating for the case of Africa in the same book. The reason seems to be a tendency by Graburn to romanticise the ‘traditional’ – a critique, which can arguably be extended to a range of social and cultural anthropologists at that time. From a present day perspective Graburn’s classification might seem to be flawed, but one has to consider that he was taking a relatively progressive stance at the time when he was writing the introduction. Instead

of rejecting objects of tourist art as banal and unworthy for academic debate, he understands their significance for both what they represent to the consumers about the exotic places, and, implicitly, the ways producers use these images in marketing their work:

The commercial fine arts are generally those demanded –more as status objects than as memorabilia- by people who wish to get “close to the native” spirit (not body of course) by having “genuine,” “authentic” artefacts to show. (...) Closeness to what is believed to be traditional by the collector’s reference group is the goal. (...) Thus the forces on the artist who makes traditional objects for sale usually point in the direction of some historical model of what is “the real thing” (Graburn 1978: 14).

But the artists do not only aim at matching the customer’s tastes but also the high quantitative demand for their products, leading to changes in the modes of production. Bascom (1978: 312), for example, describes how the production of such objects have in some cases developed from individual workmanship to “conveyer-belt” mass production. He also points out how such developments often lead to, in his opinion, a deteriorating quality of objects, as the artist becomes increasingly anonymous and therefore decreasingly worried about his or her reputation. This scepticism towards the supposed commercialisation or Westernisation of traditional art and culture is also clearly visible in literature on the Southern African context. In *Art and Craft of Southern Africa: Treasures in Transition* Rhoda Levinsohn, a self-proclaimed “romanticist and traditionalist” (Levinsohn 1984: 17), goes to great lengths describing the often highly creative use of ‘new’ aesthetics and materials in combination with ‘old’ ones, but not without repeatedly making very clear her concern over the loss of the traditional:

This visual display of acculturation [a Herero woman in Western and African clothes] attests dramatically to the effects of Westernization on the tribal peoples of southern Africa. Their cultural and value traditions in flux, they incorporate this dynamic within their artistic expression, creating a visual panoply intriguing in its history at the same time that its evolution endangers the traditions themselves (Levinsohn 1984: 135).

Levinsohn’s rather simplistic view of African art did not go down well with a new generation of South African art-historians who initiated a substantial change in writing about African art and craft. In 1986 Klopper and Nettleton published a relentless critique of Levinsohn’s book:

She does not give a representative coverage of the crafts of Southern African peoples and her selection is made on the basis of some highly questionable assumptions. Further, the idea that she is dealing with works that are essentially in transition from one form to another is predicated without much consideration of actual time-depth and historical situations. There is also a tendency to write in such a way as to obfuscate certain issues.

'Resistance Art' and 'Township Art'

During the 1980s a more optimistic perspective on 'Westernised' African art and craft gradually took hold. This change of perspective basically entailed a shift of perception of the African artists and crafters as passive servants of the dominant Western aesthetic demands to one in which they actively, creatively and originally use the new materials and themes in pursuit of their own artistic, economic and/or political goals. Bennetta Jules-Rosette's (1984) *The Messages of Tourist Art: An African Semiotic System in Contemporary Perspective* is probably one of the first and most cited books arguing in that direction. It contains several case studies of how the commercialisation of art and craft in Africa changed the respective modes of production in terms of technology, organisation and techniques. It also demonstrates how the consumers' ideas and images of Africa influence the artists in their work. But unlike many earlier writers on the topic she implies that one should stop romanticising the past and stop looking for the alleged deterioration and destruction of so-called 'traditional' styles and techniques brought by tourist art. Instead, one should start exploring the art objects' symbolic meanings not only for the consumers but also for the producers and the socio-economic effects the production and trade of these objects have on the artists' lives:

The African artist today who is working outside of a continuing tradition is considered to have been corrupted by commercialism and seduced by Western standards of success. This myth distorts the individual's reasons for participating in the tourist art market in terms of personal aspirations, rewards, and responses to changing social and economic realities (Jules-Rosette 1984: 15).

The role of the artist thus changes from that of a passive object forced to react to greater forces to an active subject actively pursuing a chosen strategy to better his or her socio-economic standing. Jules-Rosette (1984: 217) does not simply replace the debate about styles and aesthetics and the artists' attitudes toward their work with a socio-economic rationale. In her interviews with the producers of tourist art she shows that they often do have the desire to express themselves through their work. However,

middlemen and traders often reinterpret the intended message of an object according to their own interests of selling the object at a certain price. These messages influence the tourist in his or her decision to buy the object, but his very own interpretation of the meaning of the object is also an integral part of this decision. Therefore Jules-Rosette (1984: 220) demands that one has to look at these objects from the perspectives of all the actors in the tourist art arena, producers, consumers and middlemen, in order to understand the dynamics of the tourist art market and its underlying semiotic dynamics (Jules-Rosette 1986).

Recent literature on contemporary South African art and craft reflects the more optimistic and positive outlook of Jules-Rosette. The same dynamic attitude can be found in political writing on what is commonly known as 'resistance art'. Apart from making the African artist the true author of his or her work (opposed to being a mere respondent to dominant external influences) many of the artworks falling into this broad, diverse and hotly debated category can be argued to share another characteristic - they are associated with the township as a place of political struggle and signpost to the image of the New South Africa (Verstraete 1989: 165). Gavin Younge (Younge 1988: 8) writes in the foreword to *The Art of the South African Townships*:

Although art is often written about in the context of specific geographic 'schools', such as 'Bloomsbury', 'East Village' and so on, the term 'township art' is offensive to some artists and stylistically indefensible. However, segregated residential areas are still a legal requirement in South Africa and it seems therefore appropriate to focus on the townships as a site of mobilization for the development of a 'new' South African culture.

Younge (1988: 13) explicitly dismisses the glorification of the supposedly untouched 'tribal' past as "a view of African art as European collectors would like to see it" and celebrates art coming from the townships as "the artists' views of themselves in a shifting urban environment which embraces evolving forms of human association (Younge 1988: 1, Verstraete 1989: 158)." A new urban 'style' is not necessarily restricted to the visual arts, but any form of self-expression, in which the belonging to a certain urban sub-culture is being displayed; e.g. music, clothes and also hairstyles (Klopper 1992). It needs to be mentioned, however, that despite its popularity, 'township art' is still not always appreciated as a 'truly South African' art form:

This movement, only loosely coordinated more by happenstance than design, and despite the ideologically loaded name of "Township art" and the ongoing pressures for retribalization, is a genuine attempt to assimilate and utilize day to

day experience in contemporary South Africa in all its bewildering variety. But because of the context within which it has developed, the works produced have often been interpreted as the inauthentic borrowings of Western features and frequently dismissed as decadent (Wilkinson 2002, see also Verstraete 1989: 171).

The common feature among objects of 'township art', especially among more recent works, is not necessarily that they are political but that they depict glimpses into the lives of township dwellers, even when they seem to be abstract. In this sense, the following lines, taken from an introduction to the work of contemporary South African artist Kagiso Mautloa, describe the meaning of a photograph of an old, rusty and smoking brazier:

It is not only the form of the brazier which catches the attention of Mautloa, the rusty iron with fiery peepholes, and the soft grey cloud above it. It is what it represents in the life of the townships – an instant fire, a point of warmth where passers-by can gather for a moment to talk and laugh. 'I see that brazier as a metaphor,' says Mautloa (Williamson and Jamal 1996: 39).

Another example would be the photographs of shack interiors next to an interview by Bongzi Dhlomo with Zwelethu Mthetwa (Museum for African Art 1999: 65). It needs to be mentioned, however, that the auto-biographical notion not only in South African but African art in general is sometimes described as a misinterpretation by Western art critics and that this misrepresentation is not only restricted to the artists' work but extended to the artists themselves. Olu Oguibe's (1999) account of an interview between the postmodernist critic Thomas McEvilly and the artist Ouattara is a powerful example for how the artist's identity as an African can totally overshadow the meaning and appreciation of his or her work outside an African context⁵:

McEvilly's interview with Ouattara in many respects defines the limitations of appreciation and expectation, or what we might call the confines of perception, within which African artists are either constructed or called upon to construct themselves. It speaks to a discourse of power and confinement in current Western appreciation of modern African art; a discourse of speech and regulation of utterance, which, by denying African artists the right to language and self-articulation, incarcerates them in the policed colonies of Western desire (Oguibe 1999: 19).

5. For critical texts and reviews regarding literature on 'township art', and Younge's and Verstraete's work in particular, see also Nettleton (1989b) and van Robbroeck (1990, 1998).

'Township Craft' – Purely Decoration?

I mentioned earlier that the structure of this chapter shall not imply that 'township craft' as a category can be traced back as a development out of 'resistance art' and, before that, 'ethnic' art. In fact some techniques of using 'non-traditional' resources for art and craft are so embedded in South African material culture that they seem to be rather part of the 'traditional' South Africa than anything else, like the tradition of telephone-wire basket weaving (Nel 2005, Mikula 2005).

But not only is the border between 'the modern' and 'the traditional' blurry; it is also between what should be classified as 'township art' and 'township craft'. They share the association with an urban environment, the use of both 'traditional' and 'modern' materials and techniques and the claim of being 'authentic' cultural expressions of The New South Africa. However, while 'township art' is associated with 'genius masterpieces of enlightened individuals', 'township craft' is more linked to mass-produced, if hand-crafted, commodities despite the high degree of individualisation in style and technique found among a great number of crafters. 'Township craft' is therefore intended for private consumption and decoration instead of public display. In the introduction to their edited volume on tourist art *Unpacking Culture: Art and Commodity in Colonial and Postcolonial Worlds*, which can be seen as a contemporary version of Graburn's book, Ruth B. Phillips and Christopher B. Steiner (1999: 16), write on the role of private and public space in connection with art and craft:

If the public space of the museum is the site of art and artifact, then the private space of the home is the site of the commodity. The consumption and recontextualization of the art commodity within domestic settings have, for more than a century, provided the ultimate rationale for their production, for it is the private consumer rather than the museum or the scientific investigator who provides a market on a scale that motivates global production and circulation of these objects.

Contemporary urban South African craft now exists alongside and even within the same conceptual framework as 'traditional' African art and craft. It has established itself as a 'tradition' and as 'truly' African. It even has its own legends and heroes, such as the women producing the Zulu telephone-wire baskets (Arment 2005) or the children in the Transkei building the first toy cars out of tin and wire. But this equal treatment of traditional and contemporary craft in terms of legitimacy, authenticity and quality also has some more complex implications. In the case of 'township craft'

it is helping to impose old ideas of Africa being the wild and uncivilised bush or jungle, onto the urban environment. Just like the African mask is thought to be made by a tribe living in the wild bush, the tin car is the symbol for the ‘wild’ township, in which Africans live in circumstances and according to rules, which are supposedly inaccessible or not fully comprehensible to the European outsider. This idea leads to the irony of ‘township craft’ being perceived as an ‘ethnic’ art. I am therefore agreeing with the following statements of Phillips and Steiner (1999: 17) with the addition that they do not necessarily apply exclusively to ‘ethnic’ art in the sense of being pre-colonial:

- (1) that “ethnic” art is closer to nature and therefore less artificial than its modern counterpart; (2) that the “ethnic” arts of all regions share a common denominator, making them largely interchangeable and somehow comparable on a formal level; and (3) that “ethnic” art represents the final, fleeting testimony to the tenuous existence of rapidly vanishing worlds.

‘Township craft’ certainly does not fit this perception of ‘ethnic’ art neatly, considering that it is usually associated with plastic, tin and metal, and also it does not seem that townships are going to vanish anytime soon. There are however similarities: firstly ‘township craft’ is often described as recycling art. A lot of its attractiveness stems from the fact that daily-use products or even waste is being turned into colourful objects of style, beauty and functionality:

In South Africa alone, the total urban solid waste stream (made up of glass, paper and board, plastics and metal packaging) is estimated to be 15 million tons per annum. The mantra of the Packaging Council of South Africa is to reduce, re-use and recycle packaging material and in response, craft artists are finding creative uses for this waste (Coetsee 2002: 189).

The crude analogy with ‘ethnic’ art then is that of township inhabitants living in harmony with their ‘natural’ environment. Secondly Phillips and Steiner’s third point refers to a sense of nostalgia, which definitely also exists in memories of the political struggle against apartheid or in the sense of a sub-culture with its own music, styles and dress codes (Klopper 1992).

So despite being perceived as a divergence from a romanticised idea of pre-colonial African art and craft, at tourist markets and souvenir shops contemporary African craft nowadays finds itself in the same ideal box together with wooden masks and clay pots:

So, ironically, whereas earlier writings on collecting “primitive” art stressed the importance of cultural homogeneity, the new argument celebrates hybridity by denigrating the uniqueness of different cultural identities. One argument constructs an artificial world in which there is ideally no contact among cultures; the other portrays a kind of Lévy-Bruhlian world, in which contact is irrelevant because primitiveness is a quality shared by all those deemed Others (Phillips and Steiner 1999: 18).

‘Township craft’ has made the full circle. Having its roots in the use of ‘non-traditional’ materials and aesthetics (and sometimes being blamed for that) it has become itself the symbol for ‘exotic township culture’ – urban, yet African and ‘authentic’ (see Witz forthcoming). But by that it has become timeless, separated from its historical context and depoliticised. People buy it for decoration, as a souvenir or a gift. Today it is a popular subject of coffee table literature on interior decoration rather than socio-political or art-historical debates. This is not to belittle its status and significance for the image of the New South Africa - quite the contrary. It is a strong visual symbol for contemporary South Africa as it combines some major ideal characteristics of ‘modernity’ with strong references to the ‘traditional’ Africa.

Figure 3: Craft Stalls at Greenmarket Square



Crafters use 'artificial' and mass-produced materials such as plastic, wire and paper instead of 'natural' ones like wood, clay and grass. The objects have sharp edges, they are often shiny with smooth surfaces and bright colours; they are clean, hard and have clear lines instead of being soft and round with earthy colours. Yet they are hand-made, imperfect and flawed. Imperfection is a 'quality' ascribed not necessarily only to African craft, yet its connotations of nature fit the image of a romanticised Africa. In the introduction to *Craft Art in South Africa* (Coetsee 2002: 9) one can read:

People desire the individuality of fine workmanship and may even admire hand-made imperfection, be it in ceramics, woodcarvings, baskets, or embroidered and beaded fabrics. The human touch – so conspicuous and admirable in a clay pot made by Ian Garrett, or an embroidered cloth created by one of the Kaross workers, would be totally lost if produced by machine. It is the very tactile quality and basic honesty of a handcrafted object that holds the secret to its appeal.

The motifs differ, there are: cars, flowers, helicopters but also lions, giraffes and then there are pots, plates etc. What we see then is a new, yet familiar pattern: the interweaving of 'the modern' and 'the traditional' in South Africa. Leslie Witz's (forthcoming: 3) observations during a typical township tour repeat this pattern:

As the mini-bus enters the township of Langa the narrative resumes but a history of apartheid, which had been so powerfully presented in the city, has now almost completely disappeared. Now, two aspects come to the fore, the one based in an almost timeless past of tradition, the other in a world of social and economic development. In what is almost a dramatic enactment of modernization theory, tourists are pointed to spiritual healers, initiation schools and places where they can imbibe umqomboti, ('traditional African Beer'), alongside housing projects, soup kitchens, recycling pots, crèches, catering schools, arts and craft centres and bed and breakfast establishments – the latter all bound up in a discourse of tourism as a possible "passport to development".

The township as a place for economic and social development is an idea also frequently found in brochures, advertisements, coffee table literature and narratives of 'township craft' (Sellschop *et al* 2002: 165, Quivertree Publications 2002, Arment 2005, Coetsee 2002, Klopper and Magubane 2001).

The illustrated book *Shack-Chic: Art and Innovations in South African Shack-Lands*, published by Quivertree Publications (2002), is a good example for this reinvention of the South African townships. In it one can find very colourful aesthetic photographs of interior designs supposedly found in township shacks. They are definitely a far cry from the documentary-styled and informative publications one would usually expect

from a book on the 'South African Shack-Lands'. Instead they serve as an inspiration for the reader to redecorate his or her own house in 'shack-style'. Development here is not represented in numbers and benchmarks but through visual means.

3. Bourdieu in Africa?

A study on the relationship between a category of cultural goods - 'township craft' - and a discourse essentially concerned with social change requires a theoretical foundation, which helps to illuminate the often rather obscure connections between culture, art and society. Pierre Bourdieu's extensive work on this topic offers such assistance, as he is primarily concerned with the disenchantment of the art world's mythical aura and demonstrates its significant role not only as a social field where forms of unequal social stratification become visible, but which also contributes prominently to their reproduction. I give a brief overview of Bourdieu's work and recent criticisms of it, before further illustrating its relevance to this study.

Bourdieu situates his ideas on cultural production within his theory of practice. (Bourdieu 1977, Bourdieu 1984). Here he formulates the concept of the *habitus* as "systems of durable, transposable dispositions" (Bourdieu 1977: 72), which are basically an individual's possibilities and restrictions to act in a given situation, which is the respective social field he or she finds herself in:

Dispositions are neither mechanistic causes nor voluntarist impulses. They enable us to recognise the possibilities for action and at the same time prevent us from recognising other possibilities. Taken together, they constitute the *habitus* which is 'the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations' (1977: 78). Thus, the *habitus* both generates practices and limits their possibilities (Codd 1990: 139).

Although the *habitus* is individual, it needs to be understood as an "(...) embodiment of a collective history of practice" (Codd 1990: 140). An individual's *habitus* is thus determined by the history of social structures as knowledge passed down over generations through education in institutions such as schools, and more importantly for Bourdieu, the family. The ability to make aesthetic judgements and classify cultural objects into Art (as in 'fine art') and non-Art is, according to Bourdieu, an aesthetic disposition, which does not depend on an object's inherent value or its producer's (the artist's) individual genius, but on the individual's *habitus* or cultural capital. As only members of the dominant classes find the time and economic resources to cultivate, and consequently to pass down, such an ability or disposition, Bourdieu argues that social stratification is being maintained through the discourse of art and the art world:

Just as money derives its value from its convertibility into productive power, so cultural knowledge derives its value from its potential to generate acts of cultural distinction or demarcation. Thus the basis of aesthetic taste is to be found in a principle of social closure whereby groups try to improve their accumulation of cultural capital by excluding other groups (Codd 1990: 142).

But Bourdieu not only demystifies the notion of 'the pure gaze' of the art connoisseur by depicting it as an aesthetic disposition bound to (and thus reproducing) the social realities of class stratification as opposed to a 'gift of nature' as it is represented in what he calls a 'charismatic ideology' (Codd 1990: 150, Bourdieu 1993: 76). He also challenges the idea of the 'true' artist as the producer of 'art for art sake's' without economic interests. However, Bourdieu does not simply accuse artists of hiding their material wants and needs behind the cloak of artistic integrity. Instead he demonstrates that the artist's supposed disinterestedness in the economic aspect of his or her work is again a result of his or her *habitus* and endowment with a specific capital. This is the case, according to Bourdieu, because of the art field's place within the field of power, where his or her specific capital (economic, political, cultural) determine an individual's position within this field (Bourdieu 1993: 38). In the art field it is the accumulation of symbolic capital, which allows an individual to 'understand' (meaning: appropriating it as a truth due to his or her social origin) the functioning of the art world, where often those with the greatest disinterestedness in economic profit in fact become more 'successful' in the long run than their profit-oriented competitors due to their status as true and sincere artists:

'Symbolic capital' capital is to be understood as economic or political capital that is disavowed, misrecognized and thereby recognized, hence legitimate, a 'credit' which, under certain conditions, and always in the long run, guarantees 'economic' profits. Producers and vendors of cultural goods who 'go commercial' condemn themselves, (...) because they deprive themselves of the opportunities open to those who can recognize the specific demands of the universe and who (...) obtain the means of deriving profits from disinterestedness (Bourdieu 1993: 75).

Despite its shortness, incompleteness and imprecision, this very brief summary of Bourdieu's work on the production of symbolic goods suffices in order to understand its main point; Bourdieu rejects an artistic idealism, according to which the value of cultural goods depends on an idealised idea of the art object or the artist him- or herself. He instead proposes to see the art field as a socially constructed one, where social stratification determines not only the perception of art objects but also the social

relations between its agents - producers, middlemen and consumers.

Although the early beginnings of Bourdieu's theories on art and society reach back to the 1960s, his observations and ideas remain largely valid and popular today (Savage and Bennett 2005). Yet, parts of his work have been criticised for being out-dated (Fowler 1997) and in need of an adaptation to today's cultural landscape. In *A question of perception: Bourdieu, art and the postmodern*, Nick Prior (2005) summarises three of the main criticisms:

Firstly, as several commentators have noted, Bourdieu operates with a vague and monolithic version of the institution (Prior 2005: 130).

Bourdieu focussed on a conservative and static view of the museum as the ground for social reproduction through the field of cultural production. This perspective can be argued to have been flawed already at the time of writing it, but it certainly does not account for the multitude of roles played not only by museums but cultural institutions in general. This critique is exemplified in this study, where institutions with very different agendas -commercial, altruistic, educational, developmental- take on the freedom and responsibility to exhibit 'masterpieces' of 'township craft' and thus (re-)produce notions of legitimate authenticity within a certain segment of the field of cultural production.

Secondly, Bourdieu's focus on social class over other dimensions of audience stratification limits the analysis of social inequalities to an outdated classification of social formations (Prior 2005: 131).

Bourdieu writes mainly on class as the determining (and determined) factor for an individual's position in any field of power, including the field of cultural production, and remains silent on other "(...) complex and cross-cutting mechanisms of inequality based on class, gender, sexuality, age and ethnicity." (Prior 2005: 131)

This shortcoming of Bourdieu's work becomes apparent in this study, where questions of race and gender are concerned. Due to the legacy of racial separation in South Africa, one cannot ignore its socio-economic divide along racial lines, which are also visible and, according to a Bourdieuan reading, maintained and reproduced in the cultural sector.

A third, related, criticism comes from critics taking a broadly postmodern view on social change, consumption and visual culture. From this perspective, the tight correspondence Bourdieu posits between cultural habits and social class fails to account for broader patterns of culture and economy that stretch the visual arts beyond the confines of a limited cultural elite (Prior 2005: 132).

Bourdieu's strict distinction and defined relationship between the field of restricted production and the field of large-scale cultural production (Bourdieu 1993: 115) is challenged by the postmodern turn in culture. While the classics in the Louvre have not lost their seemingly timeless appeal as works of true beauty, the rules for emerging positions in the cultural field seems to follow other standards than those proposed by Bourdieu, as the notion of the autonomous art world is already widely recognised as a nice pipe dream:

To simplify, we can say that the restricted production during the 'heroic' period meant a symbolic investment with postponed dividend, where the interest in building up a symbolic capital dominated. But a good century after Flaubert, this orthodox disinterestedness was deconstructed by artists like Andy Warhol. And at the same time, an overheated art market reduced to nearly nothing the space between the position-taking - now often calculated as part of market strategy - and the economic reward. The economic 'upside-down' ended up as a somersault (Nicodemus 1999: 78).

If we try to make use of Bourdieu's theoretical work in an African context, we are confronted by another array of problems, as argued by Everlyn Nicodemus (1999) in *Bourdieu out of Europe?*, essentialised in the misperception of a lot of modern African art as naive copies of Western art forms. Nicodemus maintains that the strict classification of Western styles expressed in Bourdieu's work seems to legitimate art critics to apply the same styles and their formalist criteria to the works of African artists, disregardless of their very different social upbringings and environments. For example, Nicodemus (1999: 84) argues, an African artist, who has not been impregnated in his habitus by a generations-long line with the 'pure gaze' will have a different approach to painting, which is largely ignored by art critics judging the work based on Western classifications. In this sense Nicodemus' criticism of Bourdieu is actually a confirmation of its theoretical implications, in which the dominant agents in the art field have the power or capital to create the very same rules according to which they decide upon an artist's and his or her work's faith. What she really criticises, and what has been demonstrated earlier by Prior, is the inflexibility of Bourdieu's theory in the face of a changing cultural landscape behind the Louvre.

Despite (and through understanding) the shortcomings of Bourdieu's work today, it serves me as a useful device for analysing the social relations in the cultural production of 'township craft'. It offers a tool to understand the structural and art-historical accounts of the arbitrariness in classification through human agency ('practice') and thus complements the study's conceptual background, where the question for the role of social activity in the making of those categories would otherwise be left unattended.

IV. Methodology

This study is a semiotic analysis. It aspires to explore one part of the landscape of the New South Africa. This provides me with a certain jargon, whose terminology's relevance in relation to the study I clarify at this point in order to avoid it in the following discussion. The semiotic system of the New South Africa consists, like any other system of this kind, of signs, which themselves are made up of signifieds and their respective signifiers. The concepts (signifieds) of post-apartheid, reconciliation, modernity are as much part of this specific system as the ones I focus on in this study – newness, development, township, tourism, craft and arts. This study is basically an analysis of the signifiers (or symbols) and their relations to each other. These signifiers are of course objects of craft, but also potentially any visual, textual or actually any sensually perceivable sources related to them. These can be images, advertisements but also for example music played at a craft site and other objects brought into a physical or associative relationship with the actual objects. In terms of textual sources I rely mostly on transcripts and notes of interviews with some stakeholders in the craft scene in Cape Town. I discuss the single research methods in more detail later in this chapter.

1. Theoretical Framework: Socio-semiotics

I use Mark Gottdiener's (1995) socio-semiotics as the theoretical framework for this study's methodology. His approach is based on the Peircian semiotic tradition rather than the better-known Saussurean. Both men, Peirce and Saussure, developed their ideas of the basic principles of natural language in the beginning the 20th century independently from each other but with surprising similarities in form and terminology (Gottdiener 1995: 5). These formal similarities make it easy to overlook the crucial difference between their conceptualisations of the sign. Saussure's sign was made of two components: the signifier (or the sound-image, basically the spoken word) and the signified (the concept referred to by the signifier) (Chandler 2002). Peirce on the other hand conceived the sign as being triadic, consisting of a representamen, an object and an interpretant. The interpretant being another sign or idea necessary to put the sign into context and make sense of it. The additional interpretant makes a fundamental difference; Saussure, the linguist, was interested in communication. In his model the speaker would send out a signifier (speech) based on a common set of sign

rules (langue or language), which would 'trigger' a signified in the recipient's mind. Whether the sign referred to the object world was unimportant to Saussure. He did not rule it out but neither did he make it a condition. Peirce, the philosopher, on the other hand, was concerned with representation. In his version, a sign only makes sense if it can be associated with another sign, the interpretant. The direct route of speaker-recipient is being interrupted and the sign has to take a detour through the interpretant:

For Peirce, however, the sign "stands for" some object only because the relation between representation and the object world is mediated by the interpretant (Gottdiener 1995: 11).

So even if this interpretant was another sign, at the end of a chain of associations and interpretants there would always be one based on an "absolute object":

However, in Peircian semiotics, the material world is always implicit in the process of semiosis. Thus, we understand the sign "unicorn," only because we have seen or experienced some material manifestation of that imaginary sign – say, the Unicorn Tapestry, for example – and can formulate an interpretant or referent with which our understanding of the sign is based (Gottdiener 1995: 10).

This inclusion of the material world in the Peircian model makes it attractive for Gottdiener's socio-semiotics and for this study. On the one hand it allows him to support the postmodernists' and deconstructionists' (e.g. Baudrillard, Derrida) critique that Saussure simplified the complexity of language systems by ignoring the problem of individual interpretation of signs in relation to truth claims (polysemy). On the other hand Gottdiener distinguishes socio-semiotics from postmodernism and deconstructionism, claiming that both schools ignore Peirce's assertion that any chain of signs eventually goes back to an object reality. Instead they prefer to point out the fallacies of textual representation or the replacement of reality through a purely idealistic hyperreality, which makes any semiotic analysis of material culture impossible.

To what extent (Gottdiener 1995:70) identifies the material world as an expression of dominant discourse through social activity is illustrated by the following paragraph:

Discourse is the force that observes, reflects, and channels energies in social process, much in the same way that symbolic interactionists conceive of this activity. But social activity also produces material forms which are embodiments of social forces even if they are not objective, concrete models of discursive ideas or beliefs. That is, social discourse and social forms are two aspects of regulation and normalization processes. This relation between forces and forms constitutes the most basic aspect of Foucault's approach to society, as Deleuze observes: "Foucault's general principle is that every form is a com-

pound of relations between forces. Given these forces, our first question is with what forces from the outside they enter into a relation, and then what form is created as a result.” (Gottdiener 1995:70)

Gottdiener’s approach to discourse and the social form illustrates the links between the study’s methodology, its theoretical framework and the research object. Earlier, in the chapter on postdevelopment, I laid the claim that this study would contribute to the postdevelopment debate by offering a broadening and supplement of postdevelopment’s theoretical foundations in poststructuralism and especially Foucault. Socio-semiotics fits post-development’s blend of Foucaultian discourse analysis, as it is also explicitly concerned with the power relations of knowledge making. Gottdiener (1995: 12) objects to the deconstructionists’ idea of the *regressum infinitum* of signs and refers to the role of ideologies and power relations in the making of symbolic meaning. What socio-semiotics can then add to postdevelopment, due to its materialist standpoint, is the possibility to go beyond postdevelopment’s self-reflective perspective and analyse development discourse outside of its common territories such as academia and development institutions. In this study this is achieved by looking at the material and symbolic manifestation of development within the discourse of The New South Africa through ‘township craft’.

The theoretical framework determines the practical choices for data collection and analysis. As the study is concerned with material culture as well as discourses, I decided to rely largely on interviews with individuals, who are directly involved in the production of culture in its material form and, consequently, its symbolic meaning, as the main source of data. At the same time I made observations of the expressions of discourses through ‘township craft’ and its physical contexts (Jewitt and Oyama 2001) during my fieldwork. A glimpse into this part of my research is provided by the photographic material accompanying the discussion.

2. Data Collection and Analysis⁶

I conducted fourteen in-depth, one-to-one interviews. Twelve of the informants are producers, sellers and marketers of 'township craft' and other stakeholders in the craft scene in Cape Town, whereas the remaining two are the manager and the interior designer of the Baobab Mall in Long Street, where I looked at the contextualisation of the New South Africa in a shopping environment. I recorded and transcribed eleven of these interviews and took notes during the other two. I prepared simple interview schedules for five of these interviews, but generally kept the interviews open, allowing the informants to determine the direction of the interview within the broader framework of my research, which I explained to each informant before the interview.

The sample of informants was based on three criteria. Firstly, it should represent the diversity of stakeholders in the craft scene in Cape Town. Secondly, each informant should be an expert in his or her field. Thirdly, having the aspect of development discourse in mind, it should include organisations and individuals, who are actively promoting 'development' through 'township craft'.

In order to fulfil these criteria I created 4 categories of informants, for which I would find at least two representatives each:

- (i) Craftsmen and artists, who are producing and selling their own 'township craft', mostly wire artists
- (ii) Craftsmen and artists, who produce and sell other kinds of craft but have special insights into the craft scene
- (iii) Spokespersons of organisations and shops selling and marketing 'township craft'
- (iv) The manager and the interior designer of the Baobab Mall on Long Street.

The following table provides an overview and summary of the informants and their respective relevance to the study.

6. I attached a CD-ROM with the interview transcripts (raw and coded) and photographic material.

Figure 4: Informants

Name ⁷	Position/ Profession	Type of Organisation and/or type of craft or art	Date of Interview	Location	Transcript or Notes
<i>Group (i)</i>					
Benson Mposa	Street wire artist/vendor	Bead and wire art	23.03.2005	Corner Orange St./Camp St.	Partial Transcript
Isaac	Street wire artist/vendor	Bead and wire art	22.03.2005	Gardens Centre	Notes
John	Wire artist	Mixed Media shop at the Baobab Mall, wire art	01.04.2005	Mixed Media shop	Transcript
Zebulon	Street wire artist/vendor	Wire and paper art	23.03.2005	Buitengracht St.	Partial Transcript
<i>Group (ii)</i>					
Adolph	Painter	Oil Paintings of township motifs	01.04.2005	Blue Shed Craft Market/ Waterfront	Notes
Maria Richter	Crafter	Cardboard collages of township scenes	06.04.2005	Blue Shed Craft Market/ Waterfront	Transcript
Martin	Crafter	Pottery	28.04.2005	Workshop in Khayelitsha	Partial Transcript
<i>Group (iii)</i>					
Bonita	Shop manager	Masizakhe, Contemporary South African craft	07.04.2005	Red Shed Craft Market/ Waterfront	Partial Transcript
Christophe Labesse	Operations manager	Township Patterns, marketing township products	12.07.2005	Township Patterns' offices in Shortmarket Street	Transcript

7. I used the names as people introduced themselves to me. In some cases they gave me a business card with their full names on, therefore I do not have the full names of every informant.

Mfundo	Operations manager	Khayelitsha craft market	07.04.2005	Khayelitsha craft market	Transcript
Patrick Schofield	Co-founder and manager	Streetwires, wire art	14.07.2005	Offices at Streetwires	Transcript
Erika Elk	Head of CCDI	Developing the craft sector in the Western Cape	19.10.2005	CCDI's offices at the Cape Technikon	Transcript
<i>Group (iv)</i>					
Deanne Wiggill	Muralist	Interior designer of the Baobab Mall on Long Street	22.04.2005	Bistro at Gardens Centre	Transcript
Johan Steenkamp	Manager	Baobab Mall	12.02.2005	Office in town	Transcript

My preference for an unstructured, open-ended interview style throughout the research process posed both a risk and an opportunity for obtaining meaningful data (Miller & Glassner 2004), Slembrouck 2004). The risk was to take the informants' statements as "(...) a "mirror reflection" of the reality that exists in the social world (Miller & Glassner 2004: 125)". Again this points to the individual's role in interpreting and creating reality and this is also true for participants in this research's interviews. I often had the feeling that an informant would try and 'market' something, a business idea or a craft product, to me. In this sense narratives, exaggerations and inventions, but also and especially omissions of facts, are tools that any individual usually unconsciously, even unknowingly and unintentionally, applies in order to promote his or her version of the truth. But being aware of this risk, one can actually turn it into an opportunity, especially in a study like this concerned with perceptions, ideas, images, narratives, even clichés – in short: semiotics and discourses.

I made digital recordings of most of the interviews with the help of a digital dictaphone. In literature on or using qualitative research methods I often read about problems with recording because it often creates a 'formal' interview atmosphere, which can make informants uncomfortable and noncooperative. From the reactions of my informants I cannot confirm such problems, but I could observe crucial differences in the way people would respond to me. Those informants with a managing position in

their profession (group iii and Johan Steenkamp) often had a clearer, more coherent, more effective but also matter-of-factly way of responding than those respondents, who are more creative and directly involved in the making of 'township craft'. Miles and Huberman (1994: 264) point to the potential pitfalls with 'too informative' informants:

Anthropologists have often warned of field-workers' tendency to rely too much on articulate, insightful, attractive, and intellectually responsive informants; such people often turn out to be in the local elite.

Generally the 'managers' showed a preference for business terminology, which is not surprising, as almost all of them have a qualification in business science. Some of them treated the interview like an opportunity to market their organisation or their product, and therefore the presence of a recording machine might have influenced them not to talk too openly about their 'business practices'. The crafters, on the other hand, often (but not always, see interview with Zebulon) seemed to be glad that someone was 'officially' interested in their work. Although all of them would also have an interest to 'protect' their business practices, I was rather surprised how openly they shared them with me. The interview style with them often was in a more 'chatty' and open manner.

Another crucial point of distinction between groups of informants was the recording quality. In retrospective I must admit that the decision to interview informants at their respective work places created a significant, and maybe negative, difference in the quality of recordings, and consequently their transcription and analysis. The recordings of the interviews I conducted in offices (again the managers') have a far superior quality than those I made on the street. All the street vendors' recordings suffered from the background noise and I had to leave large parts out as I did not take notes during the interviews, which I found to create a far more 'formal' atmosphere than the small MP3-recorder. In review of my data collection process I would have preferred to visit the crafters at their sites and then arrange a meeting with them at locations, where I could have conducted the interviews with better results. But in any case I would not have wanted to have abstained from meeting them at their working place, as this gave me crucial insights into their spatial environments, of which I made notes after the interviews and included them into the data analysis.

On their own the issues concerning the data collection might seem purely practical but

they provided me with critical ideas and directions during the research analysis and writing. Even the fact that I only got the full names of some of my informants is a hint towards the different positions they hold in the craft field, and the potential tensions between them.

Despite this fundamental flexibility in my approach, my second principle was to make sure that I follow a rigid analysis procedure. I did not want to mould the data into pre-conceived ideas but let the thesis 'grow' out of the data I collected. The choice for an open-ended interview style was the first step towards this ideal state, which will always remain unattainable, as every research project is approached with a certain problematic in mind. The second step was to start 'coding' the data with a minimum set of codes to begin with. The coding of qualitative data basically consists of cutting the text into categories and rearranging it into themes and patterns (Miles and Huberman 1994:56). Ideally, the making of the categories and the categorisation of the text should happen simultaneously, as if the evolving patterns would come out of the text itself. In reality or at least in my case, the making of categories started with the stating of the first research question and has evolved to a firm idea of the main key concepts during the interviewing and transcription process, which gave me much time and opportunity to think about the ideas and images at hand. Over the course of coding, re-evaluating categories, creating new ones and re-coding the data, the initial key concepts evolved into a differentiated and cross-referencing system of concepts, ideas, and patterns. I used a qualitative data analysis software (TAMS Analyzer) for this task, which helped me to constantly revise my categories while keeping an overview of the research process. The development of my research analysis process is illustrated by comparing the initial and final code sets. The initial set comprised six codes, which can be listed in one or two lines: *newSouthAfrica*, *authenticity*, *representation*, *modernity*, *traditional*, *development*, *craft*. At the final stage of coding I had 57 codes and sub-codes, of which I present here only an exemplary fraction for the sake of clarity. I would like to make it absolutely clear that this is **not** a random list of some key terms and ideas that happened to come to my mind while thinking about 'township craft', but an exemplary list of key themes and patterns which emerged from the interviews (a full list of codes can be found on the CD-ROM). As such it does not aspire to represent any universal meaning of what 'township craft' is or any other of the

other terms listed in the table. It can only really understood and evaluated in combination with the coded interview transcripts provided on the CD-ROM. The only reason why I decided to present the table below is for the sake of transparency in the research process which I often find to be absent in qualitative research involving interview material.

Figure 5: Code list and hierarchy for 'discourse'

Parent Level	2nd Level	3rd Level	4th Level
discourse	<i>concepts</i>	africa	
		authenticity	
		culture	
		modernity	
		newSouthAfrica	
		representation	
		tourism	
		traditional	
	<i>development</i>	community	
		environmental	recycling
			sustainability
		human	empowerment
			training
		socialeconomic	fairTrade
			jobCreation

Since this is a study of signs, I still had to bring the rather denotational categories of meaning into a relational form, where the connotations between themselves, my fieldnotes, and ideas from the literature review, could be identified. The first step was to create a 'co-coding frequency report' (on the CD) with the help of the analysis software. It shows how many times a passage of text has been coded with each pair of codes. It is a good report for analysis, to see what codes seem related to each other across the transcripts (Miles and Huberman 1994: 254). I did not conduct any meaningful statistical methods on the report, but I used it to get a first overview of the patterns of combinations of codes. I then looked for those patterns within the transcripts themselves and related them to my fieldnotes, where possible. After comparing the incidences of certain 'clusters' of codes across the data (Miles and Huberman 1994:

248), I grouped pieces of text under themes, which I deemed representative for the data set as a whole. These ‘themes’ served me as the starting point for the following discussion.

V. Contexts of 'Township Craft'

1. The Baobab Mall on Long Street

I start the discussion by looking at a particular spatial context, in which 'township craft' is being presented, marketed and sold alongside other visual signifiers for the image of a New South Africa. I show how its notion of progress plays itself out in a place, where the commodification of culture has reached its peak per definitionem; the Baobab Mall on 210 Long Street, Cape Town. I have chosen this particular shopping mall for four reasons.

Firstly, it accommodates, in a very confined space, numerous examples of the commodification of culture in various forms; a wire art shop with adjacent workshop, a woodcarving shop and a African curio shop share space with an Africa-themed restaurant and a second-hand bookshop specialised on books on South Africa.

Secondly the interior design of the mall itself is a true patchwork of visual and stylistic references to different African ideals; African patterns are painted on shack-style tin roofs next to an image of a Masai herder.

Thirdly it is located on Cape Town's maybe oldest, trendiest, most vibrant, historically and symbolically charged street. 'Township craft' is surely not the only or the most prominent sign of a New South Africa on Long Street but it is omnipresent not only in shops, but also at streetcorners, as jewellery on passer-bys' necks as well as on the walls of the street's numerous bars, backpackers and travel centres.

Fourthly, as a space where symbolism and social activity intersect and re-inform each other it provides an ideal opportunity to apply a socio-semiotic methodology:

A socio-semiotic analysis of any aspect of the built environment begins by taking into account the specific design practices which have articulated with space. In the case of malls, they can be understood best as the intersection sites of two distinct structural principles. On the one hand, the mall is the materialization of the retailer's intention to sell consumer goods at a high volume under present-day relations of production and distribution. (...)

On the other hand, the mall is also the physical space within which individuals come to participate in a certain type of ambience which they crave. (...)

In sum, the mall represents a double articulation of formal design elements regulating the physical, material vehicle of mall construction and the representations of the consumer experience within the constructed space (Gottdiener 1995: 84).

The (Short) History of the Baobab Mall

Figure 6: Entrance to the Baobab Mall



Before the Baobab Mall opened in November 2003 it used to be a parking garage. The building was then bought by Mr Max Mayer, an investor from Luxembourg, who commissioned Johan Steenkamp from the Elwierda bus company to take care of the day-to-day business in connection with the building. The actual idea of turning the ground floor into a shopping centre came from an architect working with Johan Steenkamp.

The decision to give the mall an African theme came with the selection of potential tenants interested in space there. The mall got its name from the Baobab bar, which the mall's management found more appropriate than the initial name African Queen. Johan Steenkamp (Interview Johan Steenkamp 12.04.2005) stresses that another reason for the African theme was the desire to support the “welfare of the underprivileged”, meaning that he sees (or at least advertises) the mall as some kind of black empowerment project:

Johan Steenkamp: We actually specify that we must try and get black people in there as well. We shouldn't just, just have white people in there, so that's why we've got free... (answers the phone) And anyway, so we wanted to give them a chance as well, but then... and also, ja,

we're quite lenient with them in terms of... they are not paying, they are never paying their rent on time, so we're quite lenient to (...) to make sure, everything goes right. (Interview Johan Steenkamp 12.04.2005)

But despite its decision for an African theme the management is still quite flexible on working within this framework. Johan Steenkamp admits that apart from the selection of shops -and this also only to a certain degree- he had no specific ideas for creating this image of the mall as an "African" place:

Johan Steenkamp: No, I just wanted to get some African art in there, some African – doesn't matter what. It could have been paintings, it could have been anything. And the carvings [the shop for wood carvings] fitted in well and the wires [the wire art shop] also fitted in well. And I tried to get one more in, which is the one in the back, and that was about it. (Interview Johan Steenkamp 12.04.2005)

It was only in early 2005, when Deanne Wiggill, who was at that time doing a mural for a shop (Still Life) across the road, approached Johan Steenkamp asking him to commission her to do the interior design at the mall. According to Deanne Wiggill he agreed immediately and gave her the job to do the murals for the mall's front as well as inside the mall. Where the shop owners agreed she was also allowed to do the design of the separate shops. Under strong time restrictions, eight weeks, and in some cases against the will of the tenants Deanne Wiggill gave the Baobab Mall its naïve, playful and colourful look it has today.

Seen as a whole the mall does indeed evoke a sense of Africa, whereas it is rather a mosaic of different more or less familiar images rather than a single one, which are played with in the design of the mall. On the one hand, there is a strong connection to the essentialised, natural, 'traditional', meaning 'pre-modern', image of Africa, where primitive but self-sufficient tribes were living in greater harmony with themselves and the environment. The Baobab tree itself, the natural colours, the 'tribal' patterns, rock paintings here and there, the Masai warrior – they all are references to this rather romantic and idealised idea of Africa.

On the other hand there are also elements of a different, more contemporary, maybe 'modern' idea of Africa. These are the tin roofs (which were there before the muralist came in), the bright colours such as pink, green and red, the sharp edges and the faces of hip party people at the bar. The following table is an attempt to summarise these fundamental differences between the two ideas of Africa as represented at the mall.

Figure 7: Representations of an Essentialised Africa at the Baobab Mall

	Ideas	
	<i>‘Traditional’</i>	<i>‘Modern’</i>
<i>Shops</i>	Best of Africa, Ndzema	Mixed Media, Bar
<i>Colours</i>	Earthy colours: brown, beige, ochre	Bright colours: yellow, green, red, light blue, pink
<i>Shapes</i>	‘Tribal’ patterns, soft edges	Dissolved patterns, hard edges
<i>Material</i>	Wood, clay	Tin, wire, metal
<i>Living objects</i>	Animals	Human faces

Despite this apparently contradictory dualism within the mall's layout the muralist managed to keep its appearance coherent by playing with these threads in a very naïve and, one might say, innocent way. There are no hidden traps waiting for the visitors, it is all cheerful, playful, harmless – it is just a surface, a happy Disney World picture of Africa. But is it meaningless? Not in the eyes of its creator, the muralist.

An African Marketplace or Africa on the Marketplace?

In her proposal for designing the interior of the mall, Deanne Wiggill, the muralist, sets out the following objectives

- Objective 1: A neat and inspiring vision with a sound foundation
- 2: A national if not international icon (Wiggill 2005)

While the first objective seems to be a reasonable goal for any interior designer of a shopping centre, the second lets infer one that Deanne Wiggill had more in mind with her proposal than merely creating a pleasant shopping environment.

This suspicion was confirmed in my interview with her, which is illustrated in the following excerpts:

Talking about the incompleteness of the project and the need to develop it further:

Deanne Wiggill: Because I think it doesn't just represent street art, it represents an opportunity to express a very real, ahm, solution to Africa. To the whole of Africa. It's basically centring yourself. You can centre everything, which is by centring yourself, and I would love to see the Baobab representing solutions to Africa's problems (Interview Deanne Wiggill 22.04.2005).

Talking about the Africa that could be reality, if it would be managed correctly and

which she wanted to present at the mall:

Deanne Wiggill: Ahm, it would be clean, ahm, in a sense that it would be pristine in terms of nature, and, spacious, there would be a lot of landscape, a lot of distance, maybe Kilimanjaro or something like that (Interview Deanne Wiggill 22.04.2005).

Answering my question, if she had anything in mind in terms of using public space for creating a vision for the New South Africa, when she was painting the murals:

Deanne Wiggill: Yeah, well definitely! Because I mean, when you read in the proposal, it was very much... I think the African people have been subjugated by the colonialists, and over, in the New South Africa there has been, I think, greatest damage, that was done. Although, I mean, we have to remember that Africa is a machine now, and it does work, because of that time. But I think we have inherited a first sort of, well in South Africa we have inherited a first world country, we should be grateful for that, but the damage to the African spirit is enormous, I mean, I think self-esteem is everything, and if you haven't got self-esteem you are a loser to yourself and everyone else around you, because that's what you believe you are, and I would love to see a pride, an African pride being restored, and that was what my job was there, was to give Africa its childhood back, and to give Africa, African people innocence, and, ahm, and I think, ahm, mostly pride as well, you know. But I think, ahm, I kind of fell into a stubbornness that is also African, you know what I mean (Interview Deanne Wiggill 22.04.2005).

These excerpts demonstrate quite well that despite their naivety, which has been acknowledged by Deanne Wiggill herself, the murals at the Baobab Mall were painted with an intention going beyond the function of stimulating the desire for shopping among potential customers. Deanne Wiggill actually sees its potential for healing the damage brought upon Africa and Africans by foreign, colonial intruders. This notion of healing is interesting, because in this sense the murals at the Baobab Mall do not only represent the images of a romanticised and idealised “Lost World” of the past, but also the vision of an actual future, or in other words, according to Deanne Wiggill Africa’s future lies in its past. The romanticisation of the pre-colonial Africa is arguably as old as African colonialism and was often the source for best intentions with worst results. Sidney Kasfir (1999: 88) writes on the dilemma of having to acknowledge a romanticised African past in awareness of it being a historical construct:

(...) what we call ‘traditional society’ is a legacy of our Victorian past, owing as much to nineteenth-century Romanticism and the social-evolutionary notion of disappearing cultures as to any reality found in Africa itself. (...) The idea that before colonialism most African societies were relatively isolated, internally coherent, and highly integrated has been such a powerful paradigm and so fundamental to the West’s understanding of Africa that we are obliged to retain it even when we know how that much of it is an oversimplified fiction.

An historical account of this construct would definitely shed some light on the foundations of Deanne Wiggill's ideas on Africa, but since we are looking at it in the environment of a shopping mall, it might be useful to obtain a slightly more psychological standpoint and consult Grant McCracken (1988: 104), who has written about the connection between consuming and what he calls “displaced meaning” – “(...) cultural meaning that has deliberately been removed from the daily life of a community and relocated in a distant cultural domain.” His definitions of potential locations for displaced meanings as a phenomenon of Western and Christian ways of thinking are a key for understanding Deanne Wiggill's ideas on Africa:

The continuum of time is, for instance, often made the location of a “golden age.” Putatively, this golden age is always a historical period for which documentation and evidence exists in reassuring abundance. In fact, the period is a largely fictional moment in which social life is imagined to have conformed perfectly to cultural ideals. (...) Sometimes it is not a glorious past that becomes the location of unfulfilled ideals but a glorious future (McCracken 1988: 106).

But if Deanne Wiggill's futuristic past or past future is bound to nature, the rural, the innocent and pristine, how does Deanne Wiggill then incorporate the city, ‘the modern’, the hybrid, the busy and the colourful in her project, looking at the wire shop, the bar, the tin and wire everywhere, these metal-hard and shiny evidences of the presence of the contemporary?

Figure 8: Mixed Media Shop at the Baobab Mall



At one point in the interview I am telling her about my impression that parts of the mall remind me of the townships, like the tin roofs, the wire etc. Her response shows that she actually did not have an image of the townships in mind when she was designing the mall:

Deanne Wiggill: So I wanted to create, it wasn't so much a living quarter. Because a township would have been more living, more living, and this was more township mall. But it wasn't even, if you have a look on the outside, there is a picture of a few bungalows on the left, it was more like a central meeting place for a rural community. (...)

Deanne Wiggill: Yeah, I mean true, it is township more, because all the tenants basically come from the townships. Not all of them but most of them. So, ahm, and they cater a lot of... I mean a lot of the workers are sourced from rural and township African people, so... It has got this authenticity in it, but, ahm, I didn't represent a township so much as a township mall.

Deanne Wiggill: (...) ahm, so, ja, it wasn't a busy township like Khayelitsha or something like that, like it was a community, in Africa (Interview Deanne Wiggill 22.04.2005).

At this point I should point out that a number of details not fitting into Deanne Wiggill's concept of a rural Africa had either been there before she started working at the mall (tin roofs) or had been added afterwards (probably the murals at the bar, the wire

objects at the mall). During the interview she also repeatedly complained about a lack of cooperation with some of the tenant in designing the shops (Interview Deanne Wiggill 22.04.2005).

Thus this mix of old and new, wood and metal, brown and neon at the Baobab Mall is not necessarily the result of the interior designer's intentions and work but rather accidental and random. In fact Deanne Wiggill herself is very critical of the outcome because it does not reflect her intentions. But for some reason it does not look that random at all and fits quite nicely into the rest of Upper Long Street. In the following discussion I attempt to get a firmer grip on some of the reasons for this phenomenon.

I would like to start this part by introducing an idea by Ausra Burns (2002:84) that in the past the emotional dimension of the experience of urban design has been largely neglected in academic circles and has only recently become the subject of academic debates:

The tradition has been to view urban form as the static, axially oriented visual space of Western Classicism. Throughout Western social thought emotions are seen to be the very antithesis of the detached scientific mind and its quest for "objectivity." The roots of this separation and the custom of repudiating the importance and integrity of emotional experience lie deep in the Western intellectual tradition that separates body from mind, nature from culture, reason from emotion, and public from private. Moreover, these dichotomies are not value-free. The hierarchy tends to establish the supremacy of reason. Progress and precision are held above emotional, private, subjective experience. This experience is located in the realm of urban spaces and associated with femininity and irrationality.

According to Burns it would be necessary to overcome this approach, since in many cases it has led to a loss of representation of marginality, meaning that power relations on a social level have become increasingly and overwhelmingly embodied "(...) in the spatial forms of the city, within the anchoring points of its architecture. The power of authority is displayed in the centrally located skyscrapers of contemporary cities, often housing the dominant economic, political and state power of the city. One of the important issues here is that this spatial organisation seems to give an impression of intelligibility and transparency (Burns 2002: 90)."⁸ But this impression remains an il-

8. A similar point on malls and shopping centres is made by Rob Shields (1992), who is writing about the role of shopping centres and malls as monuments of the contemporary epoch, comparable to cathedrals and castles of earlier times. He writes in the opening chapter of the edited book *Lifestyle Shopping*:

lusion and instead the majority of the city's population becomes or remains estranged from their living environment, leading to the retreat of the individual from the public into the private and the emergence of new forms of social networking such as virtual ones like the internet (Burns 2002: 91). In order to stop and reverse this process urban planners and designers should start understanding the importance of the negotiated, socially constructed character and meaning of public space and put more emphasis on the actual needs of those living in and making use of it. This would demand, firstly, a greater involvement of these individuals in the planning process and, secondly, a greater creativity and flexibility in the choice of methods in order to meet the demands of the city population.

If we try to adopt Burns' argumentation into the context of the Baobab Mall by seeing it as the arguably slightly skewed result of a Luxembourgian investor's, a bus company's manager's and white muralist's somehow forced attempt to create an "authentic" African place on Cape Town's most prestigious street, then we are faced with the problem that it is not an anonymous, pseudo-transparent skyscraper, that Burns is talking about, but rather its opposite, a colourful effort in favour of the "welfare of the underprivileged" with the goal to give back Africa and Africans "its innocence and dignity". But ironically in the South African context such an effort is the exact translation of a "(...) design practice based on authorship and the imposition of opinions and expertise (Burns 2002: 93)." On a very practical level this lack of flexibility could be argued to be the source of conflict between Deanne Wiggill and some of the tenants at the Baobab Mall. On a more abstract level it is necessary to take a closer look at the image of Africa propagated by Deanne Wiggill in order to understand why it did not strike roots in its intended form. Interestingly here Burns' account of Western classicism's and rationality's domination in urban design practice, opposed to a supposedly feminine irrationality, becomes meaningful for my argumentation in another sense. This becomes clearer if we go back to Long Street, where we now walk down from the Baobab Mall to the direction of the harbour. After about three hundred

Like the castle or factory, the shopping centre and mall invite interpretation, being both structures and discursive statements. They can be studied for the cultural presuppositions and power relations which they impose by presupposition (Shields 1992: 3).

meters we get to Mama Africa, an African restaurant, which in every sense –visually, acoustically, and culinary- represents the epitome of the commodification of an essentialised Africa. Its huge front is painted over and over with painted faces of ‘tribal’ Africans and patterns in “African” colours.

Figure 9: Mama Africa on Long Street



The restaurant serves “authentic” African food accompanied by the sounds of drums played live by traditionally African dressed musicians. Tourists seem to love it, probably because it is “different” to regular restaurants; it is loud, there are ‘tribal’ dances, and on the menu you can find exotic animals instead of beef and pork. In other words, it is more chaotic, “irrational” and feminine just like the greater Mama Africa herself. It is another metaphor for the a- or pre-historical, irrational, yet harmonious and balanced Africa that Deanne Wiggill wanted to show at the Baobab Mall. But modernity is the time and the city is the place of hybrid gender roles, the masculine and feminine do still exist, but they are roles in the sense of instruments. As much as individual identities begin to fracture, the African idea becomes multi-faceted and in some sense more complicated. If Africa is still female then she is now more emancipated. In a place like Long Street she likes to wear her traditional clothes for old time’s sakes, to

give visitors the amount of authenticity they need in order to feel comfortable, but once that is done she dresses like a young and confident girl, hip and trendy, just like the fashionistas you find on Long Street on an average afternoon. The Mother City is colonial, post-colonial, pre-colonial / patriarchal, emancipated, soft and warm at the same time (Dreyer 2005). Leaving the realm of fashion and gender metaphors one might ask what this means for the Baobab Mall. It means that there one can get a glimpse of the invention of the New (South) Africa through urban design in a way that has been underestimated in the otherwise brilliant essay by Burns. As overwhelming the influence of actual power relations on urban design might seem, it does not necessarily mean that the inhabitants of the city passively retreat into their homes. They still live and work there and they modify public space sometimes just through sheer presence like the homeless on the street and in other cases intentionally like the graffiti artist giving an otherwise anonymous building a personal note.⁹ In the case of the Baobab Mall most of the tenants might stick to the general theme of the mall but they have their very own interpretations of it, which often diverge from the designer's plans and they modify the way the mall represents itself according to them. During this process the desire to display a certain image of Africa might play a smaller role than it does in Deanne Wiggill's plans and be overshadowed by the motivation to market their products in an effective way.

This brings us back to the most basic role of the mall as a place of commodification and as a framework for the commodities on offer. Looking at the murals at the Baobab Mall one can almost forget what Gottdiener (1995: 86) calls the 'mall motif':

The purpose of the mall is to sell consumer goods. The function of mall design, therefore, is to disguise the instrumental exchange relation between producer and consumer, which is always more to the former's benefit in capitalist society, and to present cognitively an integrated facade which facilitates consumption acts by the stimulation of consumer fantasies. Thus, the mall, taken as a whole, is a sign itself, since it connotes something other than its principal instrumental function. The mall motif is its disguise.

So what is the Baobab Mall's choice of disguise then? For that matter, let us recall

9. The example of graffiti art has been well-documented by Sandra Klopper (2000) in her article on Hip-hop graffiti art in Cape Town. She argues that while the graffiti movement in Cape Town is partly rooted in the anti-apartheid movement, contemporary artists -often white, middle-class youths- are rather interested in transforming public space into places of 'authenticity' and 'realness' (Klopper 2000: 185).

McCracken's concept of displaced meaning, basically the substitution of traditions through commodification. According to McCracken's (1988: 109) theory the curio shops at the Baobab Mall, the wire shop, Best of Africa and Ndzema, and in particular the latter two as well as in a slightly different way the restaurant, are all selling objects, which are serving as "bridges to displaced meanings". The wooden, and to a lesser extent, the wire elephants, the clay pots, the masks – they are reminders of a supposedly "better" Africa, which seems so long ago and so far away in downtown Cape Town. If we go further along these lines and read Pasil Falk's (1994) work on *The Consuming Body* dealing with desire and consumption, then we would find that the longing for a Rousseauian natural state, in which humans live peacefully in harmony due to the lack of the notion of private property, as it is presented on the walls of the Baobab Mall, would be expected to create among the visitors of the mall the desire to own a piece of this untouched place and time (Falk 1994: 104). In this sense the Baobab Mall's design should be expected to present the perfect framework for these commodities and consequently the shops selling them.

Another relevant aspect supporting this expectation, to which I haven't yet paid due attention, are the forces and the accompanying expectations of tourism. Western tourists in Africa are often seen in the tradition of the colonial traveller and adventurer on the hunt for "authentic" souvenirs, which she or he can bring home together with exciting tales about them (Phillips and Steiner 1999: 9). Surely, nowadays the hunting for treasures has become less adventurous and finds its closest substitution in tough bargaining with traders on tourist markets and shops (Steiner 1994: 62, 71). But the lack of own experiences and thus authenticity in relation with the object is often being replaced with some kind of context already coming with the object, either in form of some narrative told by the seller ('this mask has been used in this and that ritual 100 years ago') or, especially where historical context has become obsolete, and here I am coming back to our main discussion, through the use of development discourse, for example in some kind of a textual caption ('this basket has been hand-made by this and that development project in Khayelitsha') (Myers 1995: 59).

The following chapter takes a closer look on how old ideas on Africa are being recycled and new ones invented in the making of a particular kind of 'township craft' - wire art. I have chosen the example of wire art, because it is arguably the most visible

symbol for contemporary South Africa, where the urban in form of wire and tin is slowly pushing aside the rural in form of wood and clay from the stage of authenticity and national identity.

2. Wired Africa: Old Images, New Designs

Figure 10: Tin and wire craft stall at Greenmarket Square



The most basic and distinctive feature of a wire art object is obviously the material it is made of - wire. Wire is not a natural resource, but humanly-made and artificial. It is not soft and warm, but hard and cold. Although wire art might have some references to traditional African art and craft regarding its iconicity (Errington 1994: 208), it cannot be recognised as a clear formal evolution of the latter. Its authenticity in terms of Africaness must therefore be based on different assumptions than those applying to traditional African art and craft, critically summarised by Larry Shiner (1994: 228):

This ideology of authenticity is based on three assumptions: 1) a false view of the nature of authenticity as tradition, 2) the myth of an unspoiled, pre-contact "primitive" or "traditional" culture, 3) the Art/craft distinction and its allied notions of the spirituality of the artistic vocation and the integrity of stylistic traditions.

So what is it, that makes wire art distinctively African? The most common story on the origins of wire art is the one of children making little wire toy cars out of fences erected by white farmers. So whereas traditional African art draws its authenticity from a romanticised image of pre-colonial, harmonious Africa, wire art represents a slightly more ambiguous, but nevertheless positive romanticisation of a truly African

response to the disturbance of this harmony. Wire on its own symbolises the cold, hard, modern, colonising, industrialising and urbanising West. Art might be a thoroughly Western concept itself, but it stands for creativity, in this case the ability to turn the cold, hard wire into something colourful and warm, something African. So even if wire art is perceived as a diversion from essentialised ideas about 'traditional' African art and craft in terms of its material, wire is also given a place in the greater narrative of Africa. Patrick Schofield, cofounder of the wire business Streetwires, even goes so far as to declare that wire is a truly local South African resource compared to Central African wood and other natural resources used for carvings etc.:

Patrick Schofield: And, ahm, in terms of wire art; one it wasn't using a natural resource, and it was using a resource, which came from a manufacturing sector, which is local to South Africa. It's a difficult thing, and it's quite... because I always felt quite strongly about environmental issues, and woodcarving, it has destroyed forests further up Africa in a major way. And every time I see those drums coming down from Congo I'm just like you know... You know how many trees have been hacked down just to make...

Jan Schenk: It's almost ironic, because these, well let's say these traditional African masks and all that, people buy it because they associate it with the untouched, rural, you know, natural Africa.

Patrick Schofield: Ja. And meanwhile if you go and see where the masks are coming from, it's just like so, you know, it's... The raping of the forests to satisfy the demand of the tourists. (Interview Patrick Schofield 14.07.2005)

Although Patrick Schofield praises wire art's environmental advantages in opposition to traditional African art, he is bringing up another reference of wire art to its predecessor, by implying that wire artists are using the 'natural resources' of an urban environment. I have already mentioned the notion of recycling as a crucial aspect for the recognition of 'township craft' as a truly South African craft in the literature review above. Patrick's and the following statement by Christophe Labesse, project manager of Township Patterns, which is promoting simple hessian bags made by cooperatives in the Cape Flats, confirm this assumption:

Jan Schenk: I was thinking about this - environment-friendly and township, because other products also use this idea. And first it doesn't seem to fit, because if you go into the townships, it's not very... it doesn't look very environment-friendly. But then this idea of recycling comes in, I think. Like with wire and the other things too, they use everyday materials and do something else out of it. Do you think this also comes in?

Christophe Labesse: Yeah, that comes into the equation. We took the idea of the hessian from some pictures of some of the sites my wife visited. Originally, where the hessian is being used to, you know, to recycle,

and being used to separate shacks from each other. So it's a material being used as a cheap material, that's being used in the township very widely, and that is biodegradable, and there is no doubt about that, it's a natural fibre. Ahm, it's probably something interesting to explore, to maybe put more emphasis on environment-friendliness. Ahm, it's definitely, what could I say... there is a cultural identity. (Interview Christophe Labesse Labesse 12.07.2005)

Both Patrick Schofield and Christophe Labesse realise the potential of the environmental aspect of their products as a marketing tool both in terms of environmental-friendliness and as a sign of cultural identity. Behind this attitude is again a preference for the 'local' over the 'foreign', a notion which can be found frequently in postdevelopment discourse, especially when it comes to decision-making regarding the environment. Purcell and Brown (2005: 280), in their article *Against the local trap: scale and the study of environment and development*, argue that such notions are often based on false assumptions:

Scales should be seen not as things in themselves with inherent qualities, but rather as strategies that are pursued by and benefit social groups with particular social and environmental agendas. For example, localization, which is a rescaling of decision-making control over development, should be seen as a strategy that will empower specific interests at the expense of others. There is no reason to believe that it will necessarily empower groups who favour justice and sustainability. It could also empower those who benefit from oppression and environmental exploitation.

This does not necessarily mean that Patrick Schofield and Christophe Labesse are intentionally exploiting the romantic notion of the local to their advantage, but the quotation serves as a good reminder that even behind good intentions, especially when it comes to development and the environment, are often the interests of a specific group, rather than a 'universal' community. This becomes particular clear, when both Christophe Labesse and Patrick Schofield tell me in the interviews that the actual materials used in the workshops, the wire and hessian, respectively, are not recycled but being bought in bulk from the factory, a method that is also common practice for the street wire artists, for example. The appeal of wire art and other 'township craft' as recycling art is therefore not necessarily based on (or can at least not fully justified by) its actual environmental benefits but rather on the idea of Others turning raw natural resources into decorative and/or functional works of creativity; wood and weed in a rural and/or traditional setting and wire and tin in an urban and/or modern setting. The 'truly African' rural and/or traditional setting is the wild bush, whereas the 'the truly

African' urban and/or modern setting is the wild township.

We can see that in terms of material wire art's claim for being a 'truly South African' art or craft form is based on two main points, which themselves are references to the conditions for what qualifies as 'traditional' African art: (i) the association of wire with a romantic interpretation of African resistance against colonisation, and (ii) wire's association with the township as the urban and modern equivalent of a 'wild Africa'.

Let us now look at the motives depicted in objects of wire art. The possible range of motives is certainly endless and always in flux, but looking at an average street seller's or a shop's supply, it is possible to depict certain common features. As I have mentioned above, objects of wire art share with traditional art and craft that they are perceived to be either functional and/or iconic, such as baskets, plates or lions and even helicopters. In this sense they meet the criteria for what has been used to be recognised as "Primitive Art":

A vitiated or updated version of optical naturalism remained a part of the criterion of what is allowed to count as art: that is iconicity, pure and simple. Objects from Africa, Oceania, and the Americas that resemble something recognizable -most notably, a person, a person's face, or an animal- are more likely to become Primitive Art than are objects that are "decorated," even beautifully, but have little or no iconic content. (Errington 1994: 208)

Errington is writing about simpleness, that is 'pureness', as a main criterion for Primitive Art. Decoration is seen as a disruption of this pureness. Wire art is iconic enough to wake associations with earlier African art, but at the same time it lacks the pureness and the mystic aura in order to qualify for the 'honour' of being called 'Art', be it 'traditional', 'primitive' or just generally spelled with an 'A'.

Wire art shares a shelf with other 'flawed' African objects, and this shelf could be labelled tourist art, souvenirs, kitsch, or anything else but 'Art', depending on the context in which it is being sold. All these terms might be diverse but they share the notion of inauthenticity. Associated with them (from now on I refer to them as tourist art) is the commodification of culture - two concepts, which are too differently valued in order to get along easily within one term. Culture, bound in an eternal dualism with Art in the Western philosophical understanding, is not allowed to be commodified without losing its perceived integrity. Shiner (1999: 230), who himself dismisses much of the scepticism towards tourist art as romanticism, summarises the assump-

tions underlying this scepticism:

As soon as impure motives or foreign influences enter in, according to this view, the integrity of the stylistic tradition is broken, and the artist is no longer bringing to expression the pure Spirit of his/her people but is now working heteronomously.

Shiner makes this statement in respect to traditional art and craft, but I argue that the same notions of “impure motives or foreign influences” are crucial in order to understand the issues of authenticity of contemporary craft in connection with development discourse. The notion of ‘foreign influence’ can be found on four different levels in my interviews with informants in the wire art field:

- (i) conflicting opinions about Zimbabwe as the origin of wire art and competition between South African and Zimbabwean wire artists;
- (ii) global market competition through the introduction of ‘fakes’ from China;
- (iii) expectations and demand by foreign tourists;
- (iv) product development training offered by large-scale producers such as Streetwires to their suppliers or generally by organisations like the CCDI.

The four levels overlap and interfere with each other. Economic rationale usually outweighs the question of cultural integrity, which is often justified by the use of development discourse. The idea of wire craft as a pure and authentic South African art form seems unreal in light of these dynamics. But development discourse does not simply serve as a cloak for the profit-making schemes of clever businessmen; it becomes part of the whole idea of a New, ‘modern’, urban, shiny South Africa. Wire art and ‘township craft’ in general symbolise progress, the essence of classic development discourse. It accommodates references to ‘the traditional’ while celebrating ‘the modern’. It commodifies the idea of progress by letting individuals buy a part of it. It certainly looks good, but it feels good too.

The following chapter makes the connection between development discourse and ‘township craft’ more explicit and nuanced.

VI. The Link Between Development Discourse and 'Township Craft'

1. Development Discourse and the Marketing of Contemporary South African Craft

Patrick Schofield: One of the really nice things about wire art is it's 100% homegrown. It started in the rural areas in the Eastern Cape, and in Zimbabwe, those are the two major centres, where it started, and it was done by kids using the fences, that were, you know, put up by the farmers. Ahm, and turning that into toy art... it's a very romantic beginning to a craft. It's literally the fences, that were used to cage the people into their spaces, they were cut up and used as toys. Which is quite cool.

Jan Schenk: It's a good story to sell.

Patrick Schofield: It's a very good story! (laughs)

(Interview Patrick Schofield Schofield 14.07.2005)

Patrick Schofield is one of the three founders of Streetwires, an organisation (legally a business, promoted as a development project and actually being something in-between), where around 130 wire artists are working in order to fulfil large corporate orders and to produce decorative wire art for sale at their showroom/workshop in the city centre. The company is very well-known among the local crafters and has been repeatedly mentioned as a success story in my interview with Erica Elk, head of the Cape Craft Design Institute (CDDI). Patrick Schofield has been involved in the business since five years, and in the interview he makes the impression to be genuinely passionate about wire art, where it comes from and how it can contribute to South Africa in the future. In short, Patrick Schofield is an authority in the wire art scene both as an entrepreneur and as an expert on wire art in general. His account on the origins of wire art should be read in light of this, as one can find in it interesting examples for the use of African images and ideas as providers of context and marketability to craft products. In the above case it is a narrative of creative and peaceful resistance by rural Africans to the intrusion of violence and rationality of European farmers onto their land. One does not need to question or accept its validity as a historical fact¹⁰ in order to understand its usefulness as a marketing tool and its appeal to potential customers who are looking for something authentically South African. And

10. Mfundo and Isaac, two of the three street wire artists I interviewed, told me a very similar story on the origins of wire art, that children making little wire cars were the first wire artists.

as his amused reply to my statement shows, Patrick Schofield does not deny this interpretation at all; he is absolutely aware of the importance of authenticity in the marketing of his products.

Authenticity and marketability are achieved by various means. Apart from the romantic origins of wire art as a '100% homegrown' craft, the social aspects are the main selling points for Streetwires:

Patrick Schofield: Again on the marketing side, the wire art key ring, ahm, that's, the actual physical piece, is probably about 70% of the actual final product. The rest of the product comes in terms of the story, in terms of the design. The story is, who made it, where it's from, and what kind of condition it has been made under. And, ahm, that's in saying that being proudly South African, you know it has been made in South Africa, that's a huge component. And overseas, the fact that it's been made in South Africa under Fair Trade conditions, that's again, that's a major selling factor for us. And most of our, most of, about 50% of what we produce at the moment is exported overseas. (Interview Patrick Schofield 14.07.2005)

According to Patrick Schofield the decorative or functional value of a piece of wire art sold by Streetwires makes about two-third of its overall market price. The other third is made up by its 'story'. The 'story' as it is told by Patrick Schofield again relies heavily on terms and concepts borrowed from development discourse, 'Fair Trade' being the most prominent one. He then links it directly to the idea of the New South Africa, as he talks about the marketability of the Fair Trade aspect under a 'proudly South African' label. 'Proudly South African' is taken from the slogan of a South African industry-driven campaign promoting local products under the new South African flag. It is aimed to support the local economy as well as to strengthen the public consciousness of a common national identity. Patrick's last statement is an example for the interference of 'foreign' market demands in the marketing of 'township craft', as the 'proudly South African' aspect is only relevant to him in connection with the idea of social-development as a selling point for customers from overseas.

Patrick Schofield's attitude regarding the marketability of his products very much resembles that of Christophe Labesse, director of Township Patterns. Township Patterns is the commercial half of a NGO/business cooperation, which promotes hessian bags produced by cooperatives in the townships registered as non-profit organisations. The bags themselves are fairly simple and rough in design. An average bag is made out of

pure hessian and the only decoration would be a simple African pattern, usually designed by Christophe's wife (French like him), sown onto the bag. The only two features of the design that stand out are the company's logo -a yellow sticker with a 'funky' drawing and the company's web address 'township.co.za'- and a little carton brochure with the company's 'background story' attached to it. Christophe Labesse does not deny that the simplicity in the design of the bags is supposed to be compensated by the 'story' behind them:

Jan Schenk: So what are the characteristics of the township, that you want to bring across, that you want to market, to promote?

Christophe Labesse: The quality of the products, definitely, and the fact that all these products are made out of cooperatives, that are dealing with Township Patterns on a Fairtrade basis. Our objective is to make sure, and this is gonna be checked by the NGO, actually, that they make a higher income than if they would be employed in the classic clothing industry, that the value-added value of the care, of the uniqueness of the way they work is being rewarded, if you want, by a higher price, that brings, that delivers a bigger impact, locally and in the development of the community.

Jan Schenk: So you want to sell quality, good design, everything, but also the sense that you support something good... development.

Christophe Labesse: Sure, sure. When people buy a Township product, they should feel that it's a proudly South African, real proudly South African type of organisation, where there is a direct investment back to the townships, with job creation, a strong job creation focus. (Interview Christophe Labesse Labesse 12.07.2005)

Like Patrick Schofield, Christophe Labesse refers both to 'Fair Trade' and 'proudly South African' in the interview to the same effects. He is even more explicit than him as he is mentioning 'the development of the community', which is the township as the place where the cooperatives are located, as his company's aim and its products' selling point. He is also very aware of the 'feel-good' factor provided by the social-development/proudly South African union.

Christophe's and Patrick's opinion on the marketability of 'township craft' is pretty much summarised by Erika Elk, who is head of the Cape Craft Design Institute in the Western Cape, answering my question if she would use the term 'township craft':

Erika Elk: I would be careful about kind of ghettoising people into township, 'township craft'. But what I think is good about it is that it's edgy and innovative, and I would say sometimes... like that I mean it's streets ahead of the other stuff. So this guy could be, you know, selling huge amounts, but it still has the edgy, raw quality of it is very different from anything...

Jan Schenk: And this rawness, or the township actually itself, could be a selling point?

Erika Elk: A selling point, yes, yes. And I mean the other selling point it has I think is what we are finding is what our kind of advantage internationally, or even I mean in local markets is that it's kind of new and innovative and it's different. Ahm, and it this sort of edgy stuff, but also that there is a social story, that got a lot of particularly international, particularly the more educated international, I think of Europe and parts of America, ahm, they are interested in the story, it's meaningful that the product is being produced by a group of HIV women, or in a township or whatever and that they are supporting them. But having said that, the sort of quality of the product is still very important. I think what we are also seeing is that people want, they are looking at the quality of the way it is made and how it is made, ahm, and then the story and the social stuff is added. (Interview Erika Elk 19.10.2005)

Erika Elk is reluctant to use 'township craft' as a category. She uses the term 'ghettoising', which illustrates a negative association with the apartheid's era and the historical-political origins of the township as a tool of segregation. But she also acknowledges that the term, used in a post-apartheid context, does come with positive connotations - 'edgy, raw, innovative, different', which again reflect much of what we heard about the New South Africa in the Baobab section as well as in descriptions of wire art and other kinds of 'township craft'. She also talks about the 'story', 'the social stuff', which is needed to promote the products on the international market.

Patrick Schofield, Christophe Labesse and Erika Elk represent institutions with a social agenda. Although Streetwires and Township Patterns are not non-profit organisations (NPOs), they are also not purely profit-oriented, but profit-making is seen as a means to achieve their social goals such as job creation.¹¹ They all understand themselves to be part of the development sector or industry and they are trained both in business as well as development practice and language.

In the following example I show how the lack of knowledge and access to a development discourse changes the way it is being described and marketed by someone, who is actually closer to the practical consequences of what 'development' means in reality. The Khayelitsha Craft Market (KCM) is a non-profit organisation offering space and infrastructure to crafters from Khayelitsha. I interviewed Mfundo, who is the operations manager at the market. The Khayelitsha Craft Market has in common with

11. At this point one could start arguing where to draw the line between socially conscious and unconscious businesses or whether such a line actually exists, but this discussion would take me way too far from this thesis' topic.

Streetwires and Township Patterns a clear social agenda, but unlike them it is a truly non-profit organisation with a much looser economic relationship with its affiliated craftsmen. Mfundo, as its spokesperson, however does not have the same grounding in business and especially development though and language.

Figure 11: The Khayelitsha Craft Market



The Khayelitsha Craft Market consists of an array of buildings next to the St. Michaels Anglican Church in Khayelitsha, whose minister at the time founded it in 1997. In the beginning there were only three crafters and the goal was to provide employment to the members of the community, who, according to Mfundo, “(...) have skills and talents, but they are unemployed. But [the reverend] decided (...) with the stuff here, so that they can sell, so that they can have the bread for their homes and send their kids to school.” (Interview Mfundo 07.04.2005) At the time of my interview with Mfundo there were 28 crafters, who are paying R30/month, covering the rent of the table and costs for electricity and security.

Visitors enter the market through the sales room, where you find a number of tables with the craft on display. The range of objects on sale ranges from beadwork over recycled craft, clay work, wire art and jewellery to wooden figurines. Vendors, almost

all female, stand behind the tables chatting to each other. Sometimes visitors, usually groups of tourists with a tourist guide, enter the room and start making their rounds from table to table. Three men are playing African drums and singing African choruses on a podium next to the entrance as long as there are visitors in the room. Occasionally one of the visitors stops to pick up and look closely at an object and to ask the respective seller questions about its origins.

In my interview with Mfundo he also talks about the potential of craft for 'development', but much more in the context of the township as a tourist destination:

Jan Schenk: What kind of tourists are coming here? Individuals, like in their own car, or like busses of tourists?

Mfundo: Different people. Some of them, they are coming with the bus, some of them they are coming with the shuttles, some of them are coming with the private cars.

Jan Schenk: So where do most of your customers come from?

Mfundo: England. America. Norway. Germany. They are coming from different countries. I can't say specific, but most of them are from England, America.

Jan Schenk: And you want people to come to the communities? Why is that? Do you think they get a better picture where the craft is created or a better picture of the townships?

Mfundo: Ja, they get a better picture of how to create the craft and they get a better picture of the community as a whole, because you will find that some of the houses around here are the shack houses and some of them are the RDP houses, some of them are the government houses, as you travel around.

Jan Schenk: How do you see the future of the craft market? What do you want to improve?

Mfundo: For the future of the craft – we want to see those people to progress, and also, because... I can say it like that, like, maybe I can see the progress even now, because some of the people who are here right at the craft are the employees and the employers are at their homes doing some stuff. Because, the reason of employing another people, they train them before they (...) the craft, and you can see, some of them, they are doing craftwork now. (Interview 07.04.2005)

Mfundo, who, unlike Christophe and Patrick Schofield, has no training in business or marketing, does not use any slogan-like keywords such as 'Fair Trade' or 'proudly South African'. Nevertheless the references to development discourse are there and present beginning with the very location of the market, which is why I give a description of it above. The most important difference to Christophe's and Patrick's offices in Cape Town's city centre is that this particular craft market is located where much of the New South Africa is perceived and expected to come from – the townships.

Craft objects are not displayed next to pictures depicting smiling women waving hessian handbags and the shacks, the tin roofs and children playing in the background are not made out of carton, they are in fact very real and you don't need labels and explanatory texts to help you understand what you see. If you like, development is presented here *in situ*, with 'real people', who are doing 'real work' in a 'real environment' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998: 19). What we see is a form of staged authenticity unfolding at the Khayelitsha Craft Market.

Mfundo confirms the sense of social-economic development in the interview. He describes how visitors to the craft market are able to witness the progress of housing in Khayelitsha. His assumption there is that visitors have a rather biased view of the township as a static, maybe hopeless and negative place. He wants to show that positive change is possible and happening in the townships and his craft market contributes to it through job creation. Tourists participate in the process by adding another experience to their holiday and another item to their collection of souvenirs. Leslie Witz (forthcoming: 5) portrays the township tourist as follows:

Through their encounters across the African frontier they have been configured as not mere adventurers and explorers but as community developers. They have been cast as "contributing directly to the 'reconstruction and development' of a society and to the fundamental replacement of apartheid with a 'culture of tourism.'"

Whereas at the Khayelitsha Craft Market development in the townships is mainly represented through its location in Khayelitsha, the following crafter is using the same theme in the motives depicted in her craft, which she is selling at the Waterfront's craft market. Maria Richter's stall showcases naïve cardboard collages depicting daily-life township scenes. The images are almost identical by usually showing one or two fronts of shacks such as shebeens, schools and police stations, a street, a minibus taxi, some happy-looking by-walkers, a dog and a front-view of Table Mountain in the background. Among the standard-sized township images are a few of her oil paintings of African wild life, such as elephants and lions. This visual combination of African wildlife and daily-life township scenes refers to the observations I have made on images of the New South Africa at the Baobab Mall and in the design of much wire art. The themes of an essentialised Africa and the township as a place of creativity and change might come with very different connotations, but they also share the notions of exoticism and authenticity regarding their Africaness.

The naiveness in Maria's work resembles Deanne Wiggill's attempt to create a pan-opticum of Africa on a conceptually and spatially very confined space. Unlike Deanne, however, she is much more preoccupied with the township (opposed to rural, traditional Africa) as a place for 'displaced meaning':

Jan Schenk: [Your work] creates quite a positive image, isn't it?

Maria Richter: Yes. I wanted to depict the hustle in the bustle, the man on the bicycle going past, the dog, the washing on the lines, ja, and if you are going to the township, the people aren't really down, and they're going about their business doing their thing, making their living in the township, bringing up little children, you see the mother with the little baby on the back. It's normal life to them and if you are going to the shanties, they make it nice inside, you know, put wallpaper in, the TV is going, the radio is going. (Interview Maria Richter 06.04.2005)

Like Mfundo, Maria Richter wants to show a positive perspective of the township. In her description of the township people are busy, have TVs and radios and their shacks are decorated and colourful. But unlike Mfundo, she is doing it from an outsiders' perspective. Maria Richter is white and her awareness of this fact became obvious to me right when we met for the first time, when the first thing she asked was if I expected a black person. In the transcript above she therefore refers to 'them' and not 'us' as the township dwellers. And she received her insights into township life not from living there but, ironically, from township tours she has been on with a tourist guide she is friends with. Thus her marketing strategy is maybe less intentional but basically relies on the same points as Christophe's and Patrick's. When I ask her if the South African flag, which can be seen in each of her collages, is there for the tourists, she has the following to say:

Maria Richter: Erm, yes. Locals also buy it, you will be surprised, I have one customer, she comes back every year, she has got a son in Canada, he is a doctor. So, most of South Africans have a family member abroad. And they come and they buy Christmas presents and birthday presents, but my biggest is the tourist market, yes.

Jan Schenk: Is that why you put the flags there, or like to make it authentic, to show it's in South Africa?

Maria Richter: Erm, I think if you go to a police station, you might see a flag there, but you don't really see the South African flag on shebeens or whatever, but yes, I would say it's a selling point, yes, the flag. The people buy it because of the flag, ja.

Jan Schenk: Are there any other hidden selling points you would say? If you want to talk about it...

Maria Richter: Yes. The clinic is very popular, the primary school is very popular, education is very important. (Interview Maria Richter 06.04.2005)

Again tourism is mentioned as the greatest source for demand. The South African flag is another signifier for the 'proudly South African' image, whereas the clinic and the school (standing for education) symbolise social development.

It becomes apparent that the shiny and colourful image of the township as a place of creativity and positive change in the brochures and words of development practitioners and businessmen, on Long Street and in the collages sold at the Waterfront on the one hand repeats itself at the tourist destinations in the townships, but that the relationship between the city centre and the township might be more complex than that. In the essay *Global tourism, marginalised communities and the development of Cape Town's City Bowl area*, Sandra Klopper (2003: 235) addresses a similar imbalance between urban centres and peripheries in South Africa brought by global tourism:

Emerging from struggles for power between 'individuals, interest groups, and public and private organisations' (Hall 1994: 3-4), officially sanctioned tourism development strategies still commonly benefit those who are in a position to promote their own interests. In urban centres like Cape Town, where 'the rules of the tourism game' tend to be 'dominated by those who uphold the ideology of development' (Hall 1994: 171; see also Roche 1992), the urban re-imaging strategies devised by these economically powerful groups to attract capital thus almost invariably marginalise already disadvantaged communities.

Klopper uses the term 'development' here in a rather negative sense, as a capitalist force and ideology. It thus differs from the more altruistic and positive interpretation of development as a tool of empowerment, job creation etc. as it is promoted through development discourse. Interestingly, however, she comes to a very similar conclusion of how the use of 'development' serves the needs of (economically) more powerful groups over others. In the following chapter I explore this uneasy tension by discussing the interviews with four individual crafters. One of them, Martin, is a potter, whose craft would not necessarily be recognized as 'township craft'. But he is making his craft at his house in Khayelitsha and his extensive experience in Cape Town's craft scene as a craftsman from the township more than qualifies him as a valuable informant. The other three are wire artists, who are making and selling their craft on the streets of Cape Town's city centre.

2. Issues of Agency

Figure 12: Martin's Workshop



Martin makes terracotta pottery since the early 1980s, when his younger brother, who was working for a pottery in Rondebosch at the time, decided to finish matric and someone was needed to secure his position. He stayed at the pottery until 1990 and then started to do freelancing for about six or seven other potters. He bought his own equipment in 1997 and started his own business at his garage at home in Khayelitsha. Today he is selling his craft successfully at various craft markets, including the Khayelitsha Craft Market, and shops around town.

Figure 13: Beaded Pot by Martin



The pots he is showing me are beautifully formed and glazed clay pots, simple and elegant. The first, more obvious feature, which sets them apart from 'normal' terracotta pots are two rows of beads in differing colours, reminding one of African beadwork. Martin sees this bit of Africa indeed as one of his major selling points:

Jan Schenk: How would you describe your style now? What came out of that?

Martin: Oh, well, in fact also what happened was, because I have seen it all so I had an idea of what I want to do. When I was to sit down and start a product, it was difficult, I could not do it. And I really enjoy something African...

Jan Schenk: Like the little beads (pointing to a pot on the table decorated with beads around the rim.)

Martin: I started first doing just this without beads, but as I was working, we were selling at Khayelitsha Craft Market, and I would see the tourists would come, they were so into beads, you know, they love beadwork. And they love my pots, but they really love beads and stuff like that.

Jan Schenk: Do you think it's because it looks more African and they say pots or pottery is something European?

Martin: Yeah! I think also because when I started I was doing stuff like this, glazed work, you know, and when I was invited in one of the markets, at Country Craft Market, in Somerset. I became a member there, I started selling my stuff there. In the yearn to find out I walked around to all the other potters, who are selling pottery there, and you could see that it's all similar. I mean one potter is not different from the other, you know, they work like synth-glazed stuff. And I thought I had to come up with something different. And then I started to think about what I was doing when I was young, you know, we used to make pots with the handwork in school. So I just started doing that. And from there, look at this one now, ja when you put holes like this... And then it started slowly and now it has become a signature. (Interview Martin 28.04.2005)

There is a fundamental difference in the way Martin is describing his craft compared to Christophe Labesse or Patrick Schofield. He is spending much more detail on the actual design of his craft and a 'story' with associations to development language is missing. Nevertheless he is also influenced by the market demands of tourists prompting him to 'africanise' his products through the use of beads, as a means to achieve authenticity.

But authenticity, as we have seen in the case of wire art, can be interpreted differently. Not only its 'ethnic' origin plays a role but also an object's individuality. Martin is using a combination of both by signing each pot with his name, the date and 'Khayelitsha' as its place of origin.

Jan Schenk: How do you try to solve this problem to be seen as an original, individual artist and craftsman? The last time I saw you, you were putting, for example, Khayelitsha on the bottom.

Martin: Yes, that's what I do. All my products. It is just I can have some kind of a stamp, but the stamp will mean nothing at the end of the day, because maybe a stamp will be only M for Martin and K for Khayelitsha. But if I wanna right that I can make a stamp that gonna say Khayelitsha Craft Market, just a rubber stamp. But still it's not original, anyone can do that. So I must write with my hand there: Khayelitsha, my name, the date it was made, if it was March there, or 03 or 05. So then Khayelitsha, so that... You know how? It's what the tourists want, they want... You know for them it's so important, when they buy item, especially things like that. It's dated, there is a name, a place. For them. I find it sometimes I'm in a rush, when I'm doing my products, and then now it doesn't have a signature underneath it, the place, the dates. And they complain. Some of them say: No I would love to buy this, because it doesn't have a signature, I am not gonna buy it. I wait next time, it gonna be two weeks, I will make another one, special. Like yesterday! I was in Somerset yesterday. It was this couple from England and they were buying for their mother and friends. Two of the bowls were not signed, but they want those who are signed Khayelitsha, the dates also.

Jan Schenk: They are seen as more authentic with the signature?

Martin: Yes.

Martin: And also it's a good market strategy. You know, when they go "Oh where did you buy?" I will tell you, go to a certain place, it's called Khayelitsha, when you are in South Africa, Cape Town. (Interview Martin 28.04.2005)

Although Martin is more preoccupied with the actual design of his pots in aesthetic and decorative terms, he is very much aware of the importance of exoticism and their origin as a selling point. 'Khayelitsha' in this context is more than just the name of a suburb in Cape Town. The tourists would not care if it would say 'Rondebosch' or 'Gardens'. They want to prove that this piece is from a real township, a place in the wild urban jungle called Cape Flats. Authenticity remains valid through yet another form of exoticism.

Thus far Martin's 'marketing strategy' resembles Christophe's or Patrick's. But when he talks about his relation with the shops selling his craft in the city centre, it becomes apparent that development discourse might have yet another influence on the market than merely being a marketing tool:

Jan Schenk: How is your relation with the shops, because what I often heard is, it's nice that we can sell it at shops, but often they take a lot of profit, and...

Martin: Ja. That is exactly what is so discerning about selling to the shops. If you make a good product, you take it to the shop. Mostly the shop, they want to get this for next to nothing. They don't want to pay for it. And they make you feel like, if they buy your product, they make you feel like you are lucky I buy your product, you know. (Interview Martin 28.04.2005)

Martin describes how shop owners are using the notion of 'helping the disadvantaged' as a tool in price negotiations with craftsmen from a supposedly disadvantaged background. The economic rationale behind the process of price negotiations is being replaced by this idea; the shop owner pretends to buy an object not for the sake of selling it for profit. Instead he says that he wants to help the respective crafter, even if he is indeed selling it on for a significantly higher amount later. Unfortunately I haven't collected any empirical evidence to support this claim, but during my time in the field I have surely noticed the differences in prices asked by individual crafters and those of shop owners for almost identical objects.

Martin's scepticism is shared by Mfundo, who can report similar things about those shops:

Jan Schenk: And how is business going? Is it enough for [the crafters] to live on?

Mfundo: Yeah, in terms of that – it is not enough. I will say it like that, because there are so many craft shops now as you can see, like you can find it in Waterfront. And most of those shops in Waterfront are coming here to our craft to buy some stuff and sell it for a higher price.

Jan Schenk: Yeah, that's a problem, hey? I heard from street vendors that they also complain that people are buying their stuff and resell it somewhere else for their profit. So they come here, buy bulk...

Mfundo: Yes.

Jan Schenk: And how do you think this problem could be solved? Maybe having a shop at the Waterfront? Or do you want to have people coming to the townships?

Mfundo: The thing is not going to be solved, if we can maybe have some shop at the Waterfront. I would like the tourists to come to see the communities here. (...) but I would like tourists to come here at the craft market, because even the rent in Waterfront is too high for [the crafters], because here they are paying the negotiated price and it's very low, because the vision of the church is to outreach, at the end. (Interview Mfundo 07.04.2005)

Like Martin, Mfundo feels that craftsmen at the KCM are being exploited by shop and gallery owners. He would like to encourage visitors, especially tourists, to come to the townships instead of established tourist destinations such as the Waterfront in order to show them not only the craft's original place of production but also a more positive reality of township life. He is also worried that the townships are excluded from the benefits of tourism. Martin's and Mfundo's criticism refers to the old-established tension between the cultural producer and the so-called middleman, the agent who is buying and selling art and craft for profit; a shop or gallery owner for example. Bourdieu (1993: 76) writes on their relationship:

The ideology of creation, which makes the author the first and last source of his work, conceals the fact that the cultural businessman (art dealer, publisher, etc.) is at one and the same time the person who exploits the labour of the 'creator' by trading in the 'sacred' and the person who, by putting it on the market, by exhibiting, publishing or staging it, consecrates a product which he has 'discovered' and which would otherwise remain a mere natural resource; and the more consecrated he personally is, the more strongly he consecrates the work.

In the case of the craftsmen from the township and the gallery owners at the Waterfront presented in this study, this unequal exchange ('exploit') is further complicated through development discourse. Martin feels betrayed in his reputation as a skilled craftsman, who is deserving a better treatment from the gallery owners, because he

wants his work to be valued (and paid for it) according to formal principles and not as an act of pity. On the other side the gallery owners really 'consecrate' his work, but again not in a purely Bourdieuan sense, where he or she would market and defend his or her new protégé as an up and coming artistic genius, but as a needy craftsman, who made it to the Waterfront despite (or just because of) his disadvantaged background. As a result, apart from the economic disadvantaged, the crafters lose authorship over their own work. They become anonymous beneficiaries of well-meant 'job creation efforts' and other initiatives in the name of development, while they are really being denied the opportunity to make themselves known as artists.

This tension acquires yet another quality, as it also reflects the difficult relationship between places of the centre, such as Cape Town's city centre, and places of the periphery, such as Khayelitsha, in the discourse of the New South Africa. This relationship has already been naturally problematic during the apartheid in a much more obvious political and ethical sense, and it remains so in a more subtle way through the promotion of the township as a place of progress and positive change with the help of development discourse, while individuals from the township still feel excluded from the centres of political and economic power.

The other individual craftsmen I interviewed were wire artists and their marketing strategies are also based much more on the quality and originality of their products than on narratives of authenticity and social development. Wire artists are facing the constant challenge to come up with new designs and ideas, which are often being copied, over-sold and becoming unprofitable to their inventors as soon as other wire artists notice, and exploit, their profitability. Thus competition among street wire artists and between them and the bigger organisations like Streetwires is often based on the need for new designs and the problem of imitations. The following excerpts illustrate Benson's and Isaac's critical stance towards bigger organisations such as Streetwires as they feel threatened by the abundance of imitations:

Jan Schenk: What do you think about these development projects, like Streetwires for example?

Benson Mposa: (laughs) Those guys, ahm, I don't like it. To tell you the truth – most of the artists, the guys who are already in this business, work in the art part of it and are not involved in business... You know, the guys who are going down there, they are, some of them are just good at copying. Those are the guys who are imitating. You know, every time something is coming out, they buy it from here and then

they give it to them. Some of them are very good, you know. They can even make it look better than me. But there are things they can't. (Interview Mposa 28.04.2005)

Issac: I was the first who made the "chilli", while I was selling my art at a now closed hemp store on Long Street but it has been copied by everyone. There are many copies of the same thing, because once you go to a market and show something new, there will be others making copies of it. (Interview Isaac 22.03.2005)

'Good' wire artists, on the street or in the organisations, are distinguished from others by their ability to invent rather than copy original designs. This is also true for Streetwires, for example, where a handful of wire artists are allowed to create their own, individual pieces, which are sometimes taken to exhibitions and sold at higher, individual prices. The majority of wire art sold at Streetwires, however, is designed by a professional designer on the computer screen and translated into three-dimensional wire objects in cooperation with the more experienced wire artists there, particularly by Winston, a veteran wire artist from Zimbabwe, who is also one of the three founders of Streetwires. The other wire artists take this then as a template in order to produce large quantities of copies.

Patrick's standpoint on the issue of copies and imitations therefore differs from that of the wire artists on the street:

Jan Schenk: But still, the thing if you produce large numbers, do you see that there is this problem with keeping up the idea of authenticity? Because often I come across, ja, maybe more street vendors, and they sell something unique, something I haven't seen before. And that's very intriguing.

Patrick Schofield: When you are producing one-off pieces, ahm, you can provide work for one person. And that is very much your individual artist, you can get some really good individual artists who do that. But in terms of authenticity, it's a craft, it's not... something like the (...) that's where we are looking much more towards individual one-off art pieces. And, ahm, out of our group of 100 crafters there are maybe ten who are true artists. And those you look at... like Elias, who has just been coming back from Santa Fe. He has been on an exhibition. This is someone who is from the rural areas, he has never been on an aeroplane, and he went on an aeroplane, you know, he has flown across to America to go to a show there as an individual artist. And, ahm, those are the guys who grow into individual artists.

Jan Schenk: So you distinguish between art as individuals doing individual pieces, and craft...

Patrick Schofield: Yes. And if you look at something like MonkeyBiz. MonkeyBiz is somewhere more in between. They will... you know you go to their warehouse, where is, you know, 500 dolls. Maybe slightly different

colours and so on and so forth, but you know, there is... That, I would say, it's much... you are looking more towards the arts side. Which is, you know, each is one is, it got different colouring and pattern and so forth. But they will still... If they get asked by a client to, say they want a hundred dolls, ahm, you know, of the little angel dolls whatever, they will tell the ladies, we want 100 of these and we want you to use these 3 or 4 colours. So the ladies who make it are still being told what to do and how to do it. They are not going along and just do whatever they want. And it is the same way with us. You know, we will use 500 frogs in green and the guys will work from the same shape. So that's going much more towards craft. You know, you have to look at your objectives and say, are your objectives to create individual artists, of which you can maybe create ten jobs, or do you want to create 100 jobs, and then you have to start producing numbers of a certain thing. So you will lose individual art, but what you gain is the potential to create a much greater pool of jobs for people. (Interview Patrick Schofield 14.07.2005)

For Patrick Schofield the greater goal of massive job creation outweighs the concerns on individual creativity. And although his marketing strategy depends on the (South) Africaness of wire art he dismisses true creative authenticity as a luxury reserved for 'true' artists. His argument depends on the strict dichotomy between Art, art for art sakes, and craft, art for commodification and decoration. Surely he cannot be blamed to have an understanding of art, which is perceived as common 'knowledge'. But when one tries to unravel the making of this knowledge with the help of Bourdieu (1993: 78), one begins to grasp the problematic nature of Patrick's statements:

In short, what 'makes reputations' is not, as provincial Rastignacs naively think, this or that 'influential' person, this or that institution, review, magazine, academy, coterie, dealer or publisher; it is not even the whole set of what are sometimes called 'personalities of the world of arts and letters'; it is the field of production, understood as the system of objective relations between these agents or institutions and as the site of the struggles for the monopoly of the power to consecrate, in which the value of works of art and belief in that value are continuously generated.

Patrick Schofield believes in the distinction between artists and craftsmen. And through his position in the cultural field he helps to maintain, fortify and spread this belief, unaware of the arbitrariness, according to which his own employees are perceived (and paid) as artists, craftsmen or, simply, workers. And again, the notion of artistic integrity is complemented by the developmental aspect, under which Elias, from the rural areas, is a success story, because he was able to sit on a plane to America, where he was allowed to exhibit his art. In fact, Erika Elk used almost the same words telling me about the merits of her work, when someone from a disadvantaged

background, who was never on a plane before, is allowed to go overseas to exhibit his or her work. This image pretty much encapsulates the opinions of the development practitioners I talked to during my fieldwork; development work in the craft sector is worthwhile, because it uplifts individuals (on a plane) from disadvantaged lives (in the rural areas) into supposedly better environments and enables them to find recognition for their otherwise anonymous craft in the international art scene. From those artistic heights they can look down upon their roots in the rural village, where they used to make craft as a means for pure survival.

During my interview with Erika Elk, she also reveals that over the years she has grown increasingly sceptical towards craft development approaches focussing on skills development, where individual creativity and designs often have to make space for 'outsider-driven', more marketable but also increasingly uniform designs:

Erika Elk: The dynamic at play now is that there is still a focus on the sector and there is potential of the sector for it to create jobs and to employ and to contribute to the economy, and export or whatever, but through kind of an economic and sort of trade focus approach. The kind of dynamic there is that, if we are focused on trade and export, we can start selling our cultural capital down the river, because the focus is on being on trend or matching the aesthetic requirements of kind of European buyers or whatever imaginations or whatever. So...

Jan Schenk: It's a fine line, isn't it?

Erika Elk: It's a very, very fine line, and that is something we kind of worry about. How do you manage that process of how people can become more economically viable, which sometimes means trading in their identity while at the same time helping people to discover and retain their identity. You know, I think what I am seeing is that, well I mean first I see sort of identity and culture is a movable thing, it does change, ahm, but what I am seeing is that where we are helping people discover themselves in their identity, actually, they are becoming more successful in the products that they produce, because it's more authentic and original, it's kind of more of them. And the more you do that actually, I think, the more you actually manage to retain their identity. Do you know what I mean? If you are just teaching people to be, ahm, a kind of a cog in the wheel and just to keep producing kind of the same thing that somebody else has designed, then you do actually stand the risk of losing that. (Interview Erika Elk 19.10.2005)

Erika Elk's words are an excellent summary of the issues concerning culture commodification, imitation and authenticity appearing in the interviews with Benson Mposa, Christophe Labesse, Isaac, Martin, Mfundo and Patrick Schofield. On the one hand there is the opinion that profitability can only be increased and development goals such as job creation only be achieved when crafters become more organised and taught to use more marketable and 'sellable' designs. The price of compromised indi-

viduality and identity on a personal and cultural level is taken into account and accepted as necessary for the 'greater good' of social-economic development. The accompanying loss of agency, when individuality and originality are replaced by efficiency and uniformity, is then compensated by the myth of development itself - 'development' is understood to be a society-level goal and process rather than happening on a personal, individual level. But on the other hand, those individual crafters who are on an economic level in competition with these bigger organisations increasingly struggle to distinguish their own individual creations from the quasi-mass-produced ones and also from those of other crafters on an increasingly competitive market.

VII. Conclusion

The preceding discussion consists of two major, intertwining threads. First I visited the Baobab Mall on Cape Town's Long Street, where 'township craft' is embedded visually and symbolically in the greater narrative of the New South Africa. I showed that the idea of the New South Africa is heterogeneous and fractured, incorporating diverse, differing and conflicting images of a multi-faceted Africa, which are played out separately or in combination with each other depending on what seems required and appropriate in an increasingly commodified understanding of culture. In this context, the notion of the township, represented through its craft, as a place of creativity and positive change is only one part of post-apartheid Africa.

Looking more closely at how 'township craft' is being marketed in this manner I found that notions of progress are superseding ideas of individual artistic creativity ('authentic Art') and/or the essentialised 'traditional' Africa ('authentic African') while references to both ideas are still maintained in the craft objects' materials and forms. I have also found that this 'supersession' leads to tensions between developmental institutions and individual craftsmen, the city centre and the township.

The ambiguous role of development discourse in this context is exemplified by Erika Elk, whose job and responsibility it is to support organisations like Streetwires to become more efficient for the sake of social development, while realising that these objectively desirable goals can only be achieved through the loss of individuality, identity and creativity, which are perceived as just as much desirable and necessary for the pursuit of exactly the same objectives. The point is not to accuse development practitioners and business men and women like Erika Elk and Patrick Schofield of indeed 'selling our cultural capital down the river.' In fact one can easily agree with them that a more efficient way of using the economic potential of craft indeed requires a more structured and organised approach than in the past. One can also agree that any job won through that pragmatic approach justifies it over idealistic ideas on the independence of the individual artist.

But the dilemma Erika Elk is facing reflects the contradiction between development practitioners' supposed pragmatism and certain ideas of what development entails. These ideas are so deeply embedded in the project of nation-building in the New South Africa that they are commonly accepted as 'knowledge'; postdevelopment

thinking is challenging exactly these ways of naturalising the belief in progress and asks us to look for the real interests behind it. However the making of this knowledge itself needs to be understood as restricted by other discourses, as on art and culture, which come with their very own, yet familiar, contradictions. Notions of authenticity, representation, the modern/traditional dichotomy and the art/craft divide influence how development discourse and practice is embodied in social activity/stratification and material culture, for example in the craft scene. This is particularly true for the New South Africa, where the search for a national identity is still prevalent and where development discourse is playing a prominent role in the making of this identity.

At this point I would like to elucidate the connection between the various theories presented in the thesis' first half and the observations made in the second half. At the beginning of the thesis I repeatedly declare the broadening of postdevelopment's theoretical foundations with the inclusion of Bourdieu's work on culture and class dynamics and Gottdiener's methodology of social semiotics. I have used Bourdieu towards the end of the discussion where I talk about the role of the 'cultural businessman' -such as art dealers and gallery owners- in the exploitation of artists and craftsmen which needs to be understood in the greater context in the field of cultural production. While Bourdieu is very clear about the moral implications of the dynamics of the field he does not necessarily accuse these businessmen of being intentional in their exploitation, because just as the exploited artist him- or herself, the exploiter is caught up in a shared belief in what constitutes the value and the proper categorisation of a certain cultural good. It is at this junction where I argue the discourses on art/craft and development meet in the making of 'township craft', and they do so in two different ways. On the one hand there are the gallery and shop owners, typically at the Waterfront or other 'economically strong' places, who act as cultural businessmen in a very Bourdieuan sense of the word. They deal with, and often exploit, craftsmen and artists from the townships by buying their work for a relatively low price and selling the same objects for a significantly higher price. This very simple economic exchange is not very surprising and hardly worth mentioning if it would not be accompanied by utterances derived from development discourse. The exchange then is not merely an expression of the cultural broker's 'power to consecrate' based on his or her position in the field of cultural production, but additionally it appears to

become morally sanctioned by supposedly being an act towards 'the development of the underprivileged'. The reasons why the shop and gallery owners can actually get away with this and can even use it for marketing purposes are also laid out in my discussion and concern the other aspect of the relationship between development discourse, the New South Africa and 'township craft'. It is being argued that development discourse has infiltrated the idea of a New South Africa to such an extent that the essentialised concept of 'development' is being naturalised, repackaged and reproduced through various means including 'township craft' which is often displayed alongside representations of supposedly 'good development'. I can make this claim by following Clifford and understanding 'representation' and 'authenticity' as tools for the contextualisation of 'township craft' as a supposedly 'modern' (not necessarily in opposition to 'traditional', but understood in the context of 'progress') cultural form with strong associations to contemporary ideas of a New, post-apartheid, South Africa. 'Development' thus acquires a certain kind of constructed authenticity, which is inherently different from the kind of authenticity associated with art and culture but in the end equally meaningful, potentially powerful and problematic. It is problematic in the sense that the various actors on the 'township craft' market are endowed with varying degrees of understanding and consequentially conceiving or misconceiving this potentially powerful notion of 'development' in relation with 'township craft'. Again, this phenomenon takes us right back to Bourdieu, who ascribes someone's ability or failure to play the rules of a field to his advantage to the individual's cultural capital or habitus, which is not absolutely yet strongly dependent on someone's socio-economic position in society. In the particular context of South Africa it therefore reinforces established inequalities along various modes of social stratification.

This convergence of discourses of development, 'township craft' and the New South Africa is intriguing but certainly not easy to contain within one theoretical paradigm, as it also constitutes the conjunction of a certain form of material culture and discourse. It is here where the need for a methodological 'bridge' between what 'is' and what 'seems' becomes apparent. In the thesis I showed that socio-semiotics can help to break through the 'self-reflexivity' of mainstream postdevelopment writing. The construction of the development ideal cannot only be found in institutions and academic texts. It is, as it is demonstrated in this thesis, communicated through public

space, such as murals, and finds its socio-economic consequences in the unequal relationships between crafters and shop owners.

I am aware that the heterodox use of a whole number of theories brings up its very own conceptual and philosophical problems. For example, Bourdieu, together with Wacquant (1999) in *On the Cunning of Imperialist Reason*, does not hide his scepticism towards the de-historicised theorisation of cultural phenomena, which he describes as just another form of 'cultural imperialism'. As a response he finds himself being criticised for being "(...) ill-disposed towards the 'cultural turn', and suspicious of heterodox sociological theory and research" (Savage and Bennett 2005: 2; Fowler 1997). Gottdiener (1995), who could be expected to be sympathetic towards Bourdieu sociology of culture does not even mention him in his book on socio-semiotics. But Bourdieu is not the only controversial figure in this panopticum of ideas; similar paragraphs could, for example, be written about Foucault, as a prominent contributor to postdevelopment theory, and other theorists mentioned here.

What I hope to have demonstrated is that our understanding of knowledge-making can benefit from an unconventional approach, if it is applied in a manner appropriate to the research problematic at hand. If this has been achieved, then postdevelopment thinking can be informed by ideas on 'township craft' in the same way as the craft is shaped by the discourse of development.

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